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THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

March 2003
Vol. 56 No.7



University of Illinois
Graduate School of Library and Information Science



WHAT'S UP,



WHAT'S DOWN?

By **LOLA M. SCHAEFER**
Pictures by **BARBARA BASH**



"A fascinating combination of poetic text and artistic illustrations that clearly explains the organization of nature in our physical world. This is high art and a scientific classification that can be easily understood by young children. The book starts with a mole ... [and, following his gaze,] readers move upward to roots, wildflowers, birds, and finally the moon. Turn the book around and come down through the clouds to ocean waves, seaweed ... and fish, to the bottom of the sea. [With its] **melodic descriptive text and brilliant artwork** ... this expertly crafted book ... will be enjoyed over and over again." —Starred review / *School Library Journal*

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T H E B U L L E T I N

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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Vol. 56 No. 7



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EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED WITH REVIEWS

* Asterisks denote books of special distinction.

R Recommended.

Ad Additional book of acceptable quality for collections needing more material in the area.

M Marginal book that is so slight in content or has so many weaknesses in style or format that it should be given careful consideration before purchase.

NR Not recommended.

SpC Subject matter or treatment will tend to limit the book to specialized collections.

SpR A book that will have appeal for the unusual reader only. Recommended for the special few who will read it.

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Cover illustration by Jarrett J. Krosoczka from *Bubble Bath Pirates!* ©2003 by Jarrett J. Krosoczka. Used by permission of Viking Children's Books.

THE BIG PICTURE

Bubble Bath Pirates!

written and illus. by Jarrett J. Krosoczka

There are innumerable lovely bedtime books, suitable for reading aloud with cuddles during that standard daily ritual of childhood. Bathtime, however, is more of a literary challenge: for a start, it'd be an unusually docile child who'd sit still for a book while largely submerged, an unusual caretaker who could read while scrubbing, and an unusual book that would physically survive the watery excitement. Once past those obstacles, however, bathtime is an experience rife with opportunities for all kinds of playfulness, subversively messy cleanliness, and adult-sanctioned nakedness, and in *Bubble Bath Pirates!* Krosoczka makes the most of those opportunities.

It's the piracy that's the real inspiration here, making bathtime into a swashbuckling, splashbuckling triumph rather than a submission to an adult-enforced indignity. Credit clearly goes to the story's wise mother, who has displayed considerable cunning in evolving what's obviously an established ritual to get her two little guys into the bubbling tub, starting from her injunction to "Walk the plank!" The happy little pirates rule the high frothy seas under the watchful eye of "the pirate mommy," sailing pirate schooners through the bubbles and piratically objecting to various ablutions ("'Blimey,' mumble her little pirates" as they undergo shampooing). The end of bathtime is a glorious culmination, with a countdown to plug-pulling ("Prepare the cannons!"); that's not the end, though, since the slippery little customers evade their mother's grasp, gallop off for "buried treasure in the kitchen" (heedless of clothing or bath towel), and dive into chocolate fudge ice cream (official pirate bounty).

The text is boisterous but contained (which is more than the bathwater will be), effectively balancing its rhythm with patterned dialogue wherein "pirate mommy" offers a directive and her "little pirates" respond; the book is rife with phrases that could be happily incorporated into audience bathtimes and give little bathaneers an excuse to explore those marvelous bathroom acoustics with salty bellows. Krosoczka's thickly textured paints, the solid figures, and the ebullience (and the streaking) will remind some of Shannon's *No, David* (BCCB 9/98), but this has plenty of flair all its own. Toothy grins (these are definitely pirates with unusually good dental hygiene) and cheerful faces keep the mood as buoyant as the bath toys, but the real bounty, aside from the ice cream, is the swashbuckling detail throughout. Brandished cutlasses, a skull-and-crossbones hat, even a convenient prosthetic hook suitable for pirates wishing to chase Peter Pan in the bath will have kids clamoring for their own home equivalents, but the prize above prizes will be the snarling rubber duckie with eyepatch (who figures prominently on the book's cover and ours); you can practically hear him quacking a piratical poultry "Arghh!"

An attempt at a single-handed readaloud at bathtime will likely be scuppered by overenthusiastic participation, but there are lots of creative ways, short of laminating the pages, to find uses for this: staff bathtime with more than one grownup (really, you'd have to be a commander of the stature of the pirate mommy to hold effective sway over not just one but two such dastardly privateers on your own anyway) and flood the occasion with uproarious glee and the floor with spillover, or use this as a pre-bathtime enticement for reluctant washers. And on a hot summer day, add some salty savor to backyard hijinks: read them this while you squirt 'em with the hose. (Imprint information appears on p. 278.)

Deborah Stevenson, Editor



NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

ACKERMAN, DIANE *Animal Sense*; illus. by Peter Sís. Knopf, 2003 [48p]

ISBN 0-375-82384-0 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 6-9

This slender volume—in both thickness and trim size—gracefully and originally presents animal experience, offering a trio of poems for each of the five senses. Descriptive verse combines acuity with humor, discussing characteristics ranging from the feathery closeness of penguins to the speedy vision of bees to the leopard's predatory tastes. Though the phraseology is sometimes driven more by sound than by sense, there's plenty of diverting and thoughtful verse that playfully explores various aspects of natural history, like a more intense and sophisticated Douglas Florian. High points are the exploration of cows' taste for grass ("every meal is grass with a side order of grass,/ plus huge dollops of grass smothered in grass,/ followed by grass chops and, for dessert, more grass"), dogs' olfactory capabilities (a urinary message reads "Jackie, 5:00 p.m., female, shepherd breed,/ cheerful, well-fed, and on the mend/ from a nasty little cold, seeks a friend"), and the construction of swans' wings ("Tiny air bubbles inside swan feathers/ trap all the colors, splash them together"). Sís, one of our most talented illustrators of poetry, complements Ackerman's words with a delicate austerity, each cream-colored page decorated with a single color (which corresponds or contrasts with the type color); his stipple-reliant technique suggests pointillism in its broader use and engraving in its finer, more formal employment. The quirky explorations of a popular subject make these likely lyrics for a broad range of poetry fans. DS

ANDERSON, WILLIAM *River Boy: The Story of Mark Twain*; illus. by Dan Andreasen. HarperCollins, 2003 36p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-028401-3 \$16.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028400-5 \$15.99

Ad Gr. 2-4

This picture-book biography of one of America's most beloved storytellers plucks the anecdotes from Clemens' life that will be most interesting for young readers,

from his boyhood on the Mississippi River, to his eclectic and fascinating travels and careers; especially emphasized are incidents from Clemens' own childhood that have been made famous in his fiction—the notorious whitewashing gambit, the cave explorations, and the finding of the drowned slave. This is, however, an airbrushed and adulatory portrait (there's no hint of any real setbacks or self-doubt, let alone tragedy—the deaths of his children and his wife are left discreetly to the timeline that follows the narrative), and the writing is sometimes more bland than streamlined. Andreasen lifts his warm palette of sepia, ochre, and blue-green from the shores of the Mississippi herself; the result is sometimes stiff and overprettified, but the illustrations have a dreamlike nostalgia that captures the aura that has come to surround Twain in our national imagination. While the book will probably hold more interest for children already familiar with Twain as a writer and famous American, it can act as background to classroom readalouds of some of his more youthfully appealing stories. KC

AYRES, KATHERINE *Macaroni Boy*. Delacorte, 2003 [176p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-385-90085-6 \$17.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-385-73016-0 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-6

Sixth-grader Mike Costa is luckier than a lot of kids in the Depression: his family's business, Costa Brothers Fine Foods, is still hanging in there, he's got enough pocket money for the occasional treat, and he's got a good friend in Joe Ryan. His life isn't trouble-free, however, since he's plagued by the bullying Andy Simms, who seems determined to make Mike's life miserable; he's also becoming increasingly worried about his grandfather, whose wandering mind has been dismissed by the rest of the family as age, but whose other symptoms lead Mike to suspect a different kind of problem. This is an old-fashioned as well as a period tale, with Mike a plucky, all-American protagonist with kin in a thousand other novels and a formulaic flavor to his experiences (his realization that he's been antagonizing Simms as much as the other way around, for instance). The overrigorous specifics about Depression-era Pittsburgh (including the toxicity of the river's fish, which prove to be poisoning Mike's grandfather) are often more belabored than atmospheric. There's nonetheless a lot of life in this kind of story, and the pleasures of Mike's friendship with Joe, the two boys' careful pursuit of the mysterious cause of Grandpap's illness, and Mike's family's gradual acknowledgment of his growth offer some genuine and uncomplicated satisfaction. Suitable also for advanced primary-grades readers, this will provide some pleasure for kids secretly yearning to kick around the streets with their pals in the good old days. DS

BARKER, CLIVE *Abarat*; written and illus. by Clive Barker. Cotler/HarperCollins, 2002 418p

ISBN 0-06-028092-1 \$24.99

R Gr. 6-10

Candy Quackenbush has an abusive father, a passive mother, and a bullying teacher. In a moment of breathless abandon, she flees the halls of her school and follows an unused road to a grassy pasture where she meets John Mischief, an eight-headed master criminal from the Islands of the Abarat. Given the opportunity, she unhesitatingly joins with Mischief to escape her stultifying life and quickly becomes enmeshed in the machinations of politics and power on the fantastical archipelago. The pace is breakneck and breathless, the story brimful of mystery and

tragedy. Barker jumbles a plethora of wildly diverse species, characters, and locales into his phantasmagoric plot, and the beginning is so full that at first it appears to be a confusion of strange characters and alternative locations. Once the heroine sets forth on her journey, however, that confusion crystallizes into purpose. Candy is on a quest, but she doesn't know it; she is in possession of a valuable talisman, but she doesn't know what it is; and she is in grave danger from the Lord of Midnight, Carrion, although she doesn't know why. The reader begins to get inklings of Candy's importance in the evolving mythology of Abarat long before Candy herself, and that adds a soupçon of suspense to the already packed pages. Assisted by a variety of helpers, she negotiates her way through the islands and their strange mixture of magic and technology. By the conclusion, Barker has established Candy and friends as forces to be reckoned with in this almost overwhelmingly rich alternative world, and the cliffhanger conclusion will surely bring readers back for the second installment. Fantastical color illustrations add to the dreamlike intensity of the text. JMD

BROOKS, MARTHA *True Confessions of a Heartless Girl.* Kroupa/Farrar, 2003 [192p]

ISBN 0-374-37806-1 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 9-12

It's a classic literary situation—a group of troubled people, prompted by event or incursion, tell their stories to each other and/or the reader. Here the setting is a failing cafe in a small Canadian town, and the catalyst is the arrival of Noreen, a hostile, pregnant seventeen-year-old who manages to damage everything she touches. As privileged insiders, we hear confessions of her past, which includes an abusive stepfather and drunken, neglectful mother; Noreen has also visited her bitter afflictions on a generous older sister and a long string of boyfriends, the latest of whom is deeply in love with her and consequently deeply hurt by her. Brooks negotiates all this with clarity and immediacy. Readers, too, may initially wish to wring Noreen's neck, but she's rescued by a good-hearted crew: the lonely cafe owner, Lynda, and her endearingly frank young son; Del, a laconic, guilt-ridden farmer pining after Lynda; Dolores, the "oldest first nations waitress in Manitoba," who has recently lost her only daughter to cancer and is in the process of losing her oldest friend without realizing it; and a devoted dog that almost dies. The novel's most riveting dynamic exists between Noreen and her sweet and sexy boyfriend, Wesley Cuthand (also First Nations), as the couple's future is endangered by Noreen's hard words and harder actions. There's at least reassurance that the others will pair up; it's a matter of time and trust in Dolores' various spiritual resources, including Jesus, the Higher Powers, the Creator, Mother Earth, and the ancestors. Fortunately, Noreen is enough of an anti-heroine to balance all this goodness and keep readers guessing—and dreading—what sparks are going to fly next. BH

BURCHARD, PETER *Frederick Douglass: For the Great Family of Man.* Atheneum, 2003 226p illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-689-83240-0 \$18.95

Ad Gr. 6-10

The life of the runaway slave, abolitionist orator, publisher, and statesman receives an earnest but only partially successful treatment in this ambitious biography. Douglass' early years in bondage, his close but stormy relationship with fellow

abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, and his public efforts to muster support for emancipation are covered with insight and candor. Despite Burchard's claim for Douglass' wider-ranging civil-rights interests, coverage of his time in politically oppressed Ireland and his attendance at the Seneca Falls convention do little more than imply sympathy for other causes; indeed, criticism by his feminist contemporaries of his failure to support women's suffrage is buried (possibly with some embarrassment) in the epilogue. Also condensed within the epilogue are a full quarter century of work and domestic upheaval after the Civil War. Here readers are hastily apprised of his love affairs, his career as a statesman in Haiti, a past position as recorder of deeds in Washington, D.C., and various criticisms of his "willingness to compromise" that might have been more effectively introduced at an earlier point in the text. Occasionally, contradictions mar the prose: "America was a disappointment to them [Irish immigrants]; they were angry and eager to improve their lot. Most Irishmen were content to be employed as common laborers, while their wives and daughters looked for work as household servants." There is, however, enough detail (and fine source notes and bibliography) to make this a viable resource for interested readers. EB

CARBONE, ELISA *The Pack*. Viking, 2003 [176p]
ISBN 0-670-03619-6 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

M Gr. 5-8

A transplanted rural girl, Becky's a semi-loner in her suburban Washington school, where she's got one friend (Omar, himself an odd man out because of his biracial heritage) and where money and influence matter; in fact, her wealthy classmate Kyle Metzger, whose joyriding ended in a collision that crippled Becky's brother, not only got off penalty-free but now actually taunts Becky in school. Becky is at first opposed to allowing Akhil, a very strange new boy, into her friendship with Omar, but the more she gets to know Akhil the more fascinating and mysterious she finds him. It's Akhil who senses that Kyle Metzger's growing anger presages violence and who determines that the trio will ascertain and confound Kyle's plans. The setup is volatile and intriguing, but Carbone's two dramatic plot strands end up undercutting each other, and the treatment of both is ultimately reductive. Kyle's violent plans (which lead to school shootings and bombings) are steeped in narrative contrivance, and not only do the protagonists push ethical boundaries dangerously in tracking Kyle, their discoveries ultimately have little impact on the final violence (which conveniently kills Kyle as well). Akhil's secret—that he was raised from early youth by wolves, making him a hot property for scientific study and giving him unusual perspective on human social dynamics—is somewhat thrown away, mainly furthering the Kyle-hunting plot. The provocative themes and the romance—both in the story of Akhil's life and his growing relationship with Becky—may be sufficient to keep the pages turning, but readers would be better off with the classic wolf-child tale, *Jungle Book*. DS

CNEUT, CARLL *The Amazing Love Story of Mr. Morf*; written and illus. by Carll Cneut. Clarion, 2003 [26p]
ISBN 0-618-33170-0 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 5-8 yrs

The Mr. Morf of the title is a dog, but no ordinary dog: he's a daring tightrope walker in the circus, who's been "performing at the big top since puppyhood."

One day the lonely grind finally gets to him, and he longs for the happy bonding that seems to be the fortunate lot of his friends. When he mounts a search for a friend to love, he's initially unsuccessful—the bird is soon flying away, the mole gets lost underground, the wolf's motives are questionable—until finally he discovers a friend ("So tiny, so sweet, and oh! so very different") in the flea named Isabella, who's been tickling him till he giggles. Though there's a definite flair to the writing style, the story is even more rambling than Mr. Morf's journey, and the ending is somewhat abrupt as well as illogical (didn't Mr. Morf have fleas before? How long is a flea really going to be around anyway?). The mixed-media illustrations are the real draw here: Cneut's finely sculpted layers of pigment and crisp, shadowed outlines suggest collage, and his delicate yet restrained detailing gives the images a pleasingly old-fashioned air. The circus colors, especially the red, are employed sparingly against paler backgrounds and more subdued tones, in keeping with the poker-faced visual treatment of the silly story. There are more successful stories of friendship (and, for that matter, dogs), but this may still divert youngsters with a taste for the offbeat. DS

COOKE, TRISH *Full, Full, Full of Love*; illus. by Paul Howard. Candlewick, 2003 [26p]

ISBN 0-7636-1851-9 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

R 4-7 yrs

Jay Jay goes to Sunday dinner at his grandmother's house, and he is hungry, asking "Is dinner ready, Gran?" over and over. Gran keeps her impatient grandson busy setting the table, watching the tropical fish, and looking out the window for family, and when everyone in this extended African-American family has arrived ("Uncles and aunts, cousins and friends, Mama and Daddy") Sunday dinner is truly ready. Cooke's simple ode to family gatherings takes on a rhythmic swing with refrains describing how "full" things are at Grannie's house: cupboards full of dishes, fish tank full of fishes, tin full of candies, and Grannie herself full of hugs and kisses. The text skirts the almost inevitable sentimentality attached to this sort of tale: Jay Jay isn't above getting into some mischief with the candy tin, and his grandmother isn't above making sure someone else does the cleaning up after she does the cooking up ("All right, you kids—one wash, one dry!"). Acrylic and pencil illustrations (reminiscent of Helen Oxenbury's work) feature soft-eyed, round-shaped, cozy figures in a sun-yellow kitchen, in compositions large enough to be seen clearly by small groups. Scenes of Jay Jay and his grandmother and of the family gathered around the dining room lingering over coffee are sure to trigger some sharable memories for the adults reading this title; children listening will be happy to hear them, and they'll want to make some memories of their own. JMD

COWLEY, JOY *Agapanthus Hum and the Angel Hoot*; illus. by Jennifer Plecas. Philomel, 2003 50p

ISBN 0-399-23344-X \$13.99

R Gr. 1-3

Agapanthus Hum (of *Agapanthus Hum and the Eyeglasses*, BCCB 4/94, etc.) returns in this easy chapter book about that major milestone—losing one's first tooth. In seven short chapters, the irrepressible *Agapanthus* loses a tooth ("One day, it fell out on a bite of carrot, and dropped like a pearl into her lap"), learns to angel hoot (whistle through her "tooth tunnel"), sings duets with her dog, Major Bark

(who howls when she hoots), and becomes the star of her classroom “Show-and-Tell.” Each little mini-drama in *Agapanthus*’ young life (this is formatted as an easy reader, but it would do equally well as a readaloud) is presented in immediate language that clearly evokes the endearing main character and her “whizzy” personality, whether she is “humming a good buzzing song” in the garden or practicing her “hoot-and-howl” act with Major Bark. Plecas’ watercolors have a “whizzy” aspect of their own: the wiggly lines seem to vibrate with enthusiasm. From her shock of red pigtailed to the constant disarray of her forever-falling eyeglasses, *Agapanthus* is a delighted mass of quivering energy; other dot-eyed characters are remarkably expressive for their minimalist representation. Fans old and new will welcome *Agapanthus*, a contemporary heroine who makes *gaucherie* a desirable trait. JMD

CUSHMAN, KAREN *Rodzina*. Clarion, 2003 [224p]
ISBN 0-618-13351-8 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

It’s 1881, and *Rodzina* Brodski is headed west from Chicago on an orphan train. *Rodzina* is convinced that only people with dubious intentions would want to adopt her, in part because of what a fellow street kid tells her (“That orphanage . . . sells [orphans] to families that want slaves”) and in part because of her age (twelve), size (husky), looks (plain), and ethnicity (Polish). As it turns out, she’s right—the only potential adopters she encounters along the journey are a pair of elderly sisters who want an unpaid laborer and a scuzzy old geezer looking for a replacement wife (and mother for his numerous children). Happily, *Rodzina* escapes both situations, but her heart grows heavier as she watches the younger orphans she’s befriended and cared for along the way get snapped up by eager families until only she alone remains. Will she be forced to enter the Boys’ and Girls’ Training School, or can she convince the orphan-train chaperone (a frosty young female doctor facing prejudices of her own) to adopt her? Though the answer will come as no surprise to most readers, Cushman’s “orphan-finds-a-home” happy ending is both satisfying and reasonably plausible. *Rodzina* is an engaging, well-fleshed-out (literally) heroine whose matter-of-fact narrative voice is by turns curious, resentful, humorous, and sad (“I cried myself to sleep so quietly that no one could hear. Not even me”); her memories of and longing for her dead parents and brothers are particularly moving. Historical fiction and orphan fans will find this a comfortable and informative read, while social studies teachers may find it useful as a readaloud that touches on city life vs. rural life, westward expansion, and ethnic, class, and gender inequalities. Cushman ends with a note on orphan trains and the history of the “placing out” of children in Western society; a pronunciation guide will also be included. JMH

DAMM, ANTJE *Ask Me*; written and illus. with photographs by Antje Damm; tr. by Doris Orgel. Porter/Roaring Brook, 2003 220p
ISBN 0-7613-1845-3 \$14.95

R 4-8 yrs

More than a hundred simple questions are offered here to prompt children to share their feelings and memories, aspirations and talents. Each query cuts through the middle of the solid-colored page on the left of the spread, and a picture—photograph or cartoon-styled painting—claims the recto. Many of the discussion starters are straightforward: “Which animals scare you?” (a mouse creeps toward

the bathroom while a shin and foot angle toward the page's edge, suggesting a hasty flight); "Did you ever make your own toys?" (a photo of a cardboard and cloth dollhouse displays a toy clearly crafted with more love than skill). Others are more probing: "What rules have you made?"; "Have you ever been homesick?"; "Where would you like to wake up tomorrow morning?" Damm intends her title to "stimulate conversation between parents and children," but it could also function as a resource for preschool and primary teachers looking for classroom ice breakers. There are only a very, very few persons of color to be found among the scores of images in this German import, and some dialogue facilitators will want to prepare themselves for the answers to "Is there a bad word you think is funny?" Still, this could be just the answer for those rare occasions when the challenge is getting kids to talk. EB

DEAK, ERZSI, comp. *Period Pieces*; comp. by Erzsi Deak and Kristin Embry Litchman. HarperCollins, 2003 [160p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-623797-1 \$16.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-623796-3 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-8

This perkily packaged collection includes one poem and a dozen short stories about girls getting their first period, from authors such as Linda Sue Park, Rita Williams-Garcia, Carmen T. Bernier-Grand, and Johanna Hurwitz, among others. Most of the tales are autobiographical or semi-autobiographical, and they present good examples of how menstruation was viewed in the authors' personal pasts. The tales therefore often have an old-fashioned tone that results in an odd dissonance; despite the sisterly camaraderie lauded in the introduction, some of the stories unintentionally perpetuate dated stereotypes about menstruation (including the use of quaintly euphemistic terminology for menstruation, such as having "Little Bears make you growl" or "Auntie pay you a visit"). Standout stories that avoid the negative nostalgia trap include Jane Kurtz's "A Family Sandwich," wherein a young girl comes to terms with her mother's death and her own place in the family; Cynthia Leitich Smith's "The Gentleman Cowboy," in which the main character has a most embarrassing moment with a cowboy guide who luckily has four sisters and lots of experience with feminine emergencies; and Uma Krishnaswami's "The Gift," in which a traditional token of celebration is passed down through three generations of women. A concluding section about the contributors allows the authors to further contextualize their stories and their menses experiences; biographical information is included. JMD

DEPAOLA, TOMIE *Things Will NEVER Be the Same*; written and illus. by Tomie dePaola. Putnam, 2003 [80p]

ISBN 0-399-23982-0 \$13.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 2-4

This fifth entry in dePaola's autobiographical series for young readers picks up right where the last title (*What a Year*, BCCB 3/02) left off, with young Tomie going back to first grade after the Christmas holidays. Winter sledding, family stories, school musicals, Disney movies, amusement parks, and the transition to second grade all stand out as highlights for the lively boy. The author incorporates a plot element from *What a Year* that results in a different look for this title: at the end of the fourth book, Tomie was given a diary for Christmas by his grand-

mother, and this new title is sprinkled with journal entries and drawings from the budding artist. These entries break up the text in an unforced, natural way that is sure to have visual appeal for transitional readers sometimes put off by dense text. The storytelling in this title is lighter and more suited to the emerging personality of the chatty young author (up until the final journal entry for December 7, 1941), with more emphasis on action and feeling than on detailed minutiae that sometimes slow the pace. Full-page black-and-white illustrations and spot art scattered throughout give a gentle sense of time and place, while still evincing dePaola's recognizable and effective illustrative style. JMD

DIAKITÉ, BABA WAGUÉ, ad. *The Magic Gourd*; ad. and illus. by Baba Wagué Diakité. Scholastic, 2003 [32p]
ISBN 0-439-43960-4 \$16.95
Reviewed from galleys R 5-8 yrs

Brother Rabbit is foraging for wild roots to feed his family when he rescues Chameleon from a thorny bush; in his gratitude, Chameleon gives Brother Rabbit a magical gourd that will fill with whatever he desires whenever he desires it. The gourd not only feeds Brother Rabbit and his family but also their friends and neighbors, and soon the magical gourd comes to the attention of a greedy king. The king takes the gourd by force, but a second gift from Chameleon enables Brother Rabbit to retrieve it and to teach the greedy king a lesson, too: "Let us appreciate what we have been given." Diakité (reteller of *The Huntsman and the Crocodile*, BCCB 2/97) offers a traditional tale from Mali that delivers its message with gentle humor. From the quietly poetic opening ("It all began when the sun refused to allow the clouds to gather, and there was no rain. First came drought. Then came famine. Everyone was hungry") to the quietly wise conclusion ("As for Rabbit and Chameleon, they have always understood that loyal friendships are the true treasures that make one rich"), Diakité's subtly cadenced language moves reader and listener along. Photographs of the decorative ceramic tiles, trays, and bowls created by Diakité to illustrate this tale are set against glossy pages (each a different background color); the ceramics are bordered with black-and-white designs taken from traditional *bogolanfiniw*, or mud cloth, a textile technique specific to the Bamana people of Mali. Images on each ceramic piece pictorially spell out the story, and a specially sculpted statue of Chameleon graces some of the pages. While no specific source is given for this particular tale, the addenda do include notes on the culture of Mali, as well as the symbolism in the art (each mud cloth pattern has a specific meaning, for example). A glossary of Bambaran terms used in the text and a note on folkloric variants are also included. JMD

DODDS, DAYLE ANN *Where's Pup?*; illus. by Pierre Pratt. Dial, 2003 28p
ISBN 0-8037-2744-5 \$12.99 R Gr. 1-2

This beginning reader cuts right to the search, if not actually the chase, as a diminutive circus performer wanders the circus looking for his misplaced dog. The circus people are very busy indeed, preparing their acts and their animals, and they each refer Pup's questing owner along to the next likely informant ("Don't know. Go ask Jo. She's feeding Mo"). The search sequence is a touch lengthy, and the book's novice readers may initially be puzzled by the slight conceptual twist that has each respondent describing the action on the next spread, rather than the current one. Overall, however, this is an inventive beginning reader in its plausible

motivation for the helpful repetition, and the circus setting adds excitement. Dodds streamlines the reading further, without draining the text of its energy, by building questions and answers from short rhyming phrases with lots of recycled words. Pratt's acrylics are a three-ring circus in their own right, providing wall-to-wall rich color but especially relying on the reds and oranges of the big top and contrasting touches of peacock and gold (even the huge gorilla sports gold-touched peacock drawers). For all his clown shoes and ruff, the knee-high protagonist is an earnest and bespectacled little guy, marching determinedly through animal acts and clambering up ladders to pose his important question. The final answer to this question involves an effectively employed piece of paper engineering, as the reader (and the protagonist) is told just to look up, "And up,/ and up" as the page unfolds and unfolds at the top, revealing several tiers of an acrobatic pyramid with a proud Pup at the top. Friendly to beginning readers without being condescending, this would also divert toddlers just getting started on narrative, who will gleefully join in on the repeated titular question. DS

FARRIS, CHRISTINE KING *My Brother Martin: A Sister Remembers Growing Up with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*; illus. by Chris Soentpiet. Simon, 2003 40p

ISBN 0-689-84387-9 \$17.95

Ad 5-8 yrs

Farris introduces herself with a small inset black-and-white photo and a few plainspoken words: "I am his older sister . . . I knew him long before the speeches he gave and the marches he led and the prizes he won." Here's a source of authority that young children will understand—even a national hero of Dr. King's stature can't squirm out from under the glare of a big sister. By first presenting her brother Martin's early years as fellow trickster and ordinary member of the noisy neighborhood pack, Farris weaves the context into which his early experience of social cruelty ("The [white neighbor] boys had told my brothers that they couldn't play together anymore because A.D. and M.L. were Negroes") opens his eyes to the need for social reform. Soentpiet's scenes, bathed in an unearthly garish glow that fairly demands protective eyewear, tend to undermine Farris's attempt to convey the cozy familiarity of their family's life. Grandma sits stiffly poised with a frozen grin while Aunt Ida reads the siblings a story, neighbors react with minstrel-show comic horror to a trick the youngsters play with their grandmother's fur piece, and facial expressions and body language are often too exaggerated to be credible. Nonetheless, by focusing squarely on King's early years Farris and Soentpiet do manage to demonstrate for a young audience how even the most lovingly protected children could not avoid discrimination indefinitely, and how the family's quiet but steely resistance to injustice helped set King on his future course. EB

FITZGERALD, ELLA, ad. *A-Tisket, A-Tasket*; ad. by Ella Fitzgerald and Van Alexander; illus. by Ora Eitan. Philomel, 2003 26p

ISBN 0-399-23206-0 \$15.99

Ad 2-4 yrs

The lyrics of Fitzgerald's swinging nursery rhyme (adapted by Fitzgerald and Alexander from the traditional rhyme) are narratively expanded by computer-enhanced mixed media. A little white boy writes a letter to his mommy, puts it in his basket, and goes for a walk; when he drops the basket, "a little girlie picked it up and took it to the market." The little African-American girl takes the basket to the park; in the meantime the boy is having a temper tantrum ("She took it, she

took it, my little yellow basket, // and if she doesn't bring it back, I think that I shall die") and asking passersby if they have seen his basket. In the end, he gets it back ("A-tisket, a-tasket, I found my yellow basket. / I thought I lost it to that girlie, // but I found it after all"). What makes a memorable jazz recording doesn't necessarily make a good picture-book text, and the printed lyrics lack the pizzazz of Fitzgerald's spirited rendition, but there's enough of a narrative thread to keep singing preschoolers interested. Some of Eitan's semi-abstract collage images are overwhelmed by clashing patterns, but the strong figures have a dramatic impact against artistically reproduced images of New York City. Those seeking a picture book that combines visual and musical art will be better served by Raschka's *John Coltrane's Giant Steps* (BCCB 9/02), but this could make a mild musical diversion for the preschool crowd. JMD

FREDERICKS, MARIAH *The True Meaning of Cleavage*. Jackson/Atheneum, 20043 [224p]

ISBN 0-689-85092-1 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-10

"Being guillotined only takes a second. Whereas freshman year lasts much, much longer," thinks Jess at the beginning of the dreaded school year. Trouble almost immediately comes from a surprising quarter, when Jess' magnetic friend and lifeline, Sari, begins to have ambitions beyond the friends' current socially marginal status and manifests them in a particularly disturbing way: she makes a play for the most popular boy in school, senior David Cole, who's involved in a steady relationship with a long-term girlfriend. What's worse is that the play is, in Sari's eyes, successful, since David secretly sees her when he can fit her into his schedule; Jess is appalled by her friend's blindness to the fact that David is using the attractive and desperate girl for flattery and satisfaction while never intending to endanger his real romance. Fredericks capably manages the difficult feat of providing nuanced perspective on Sari's behavior (and Jess' reaction) without making Jess' narration implausibly sophisticated. On the one hand, Sari is a glamorous friend with interest in popularity that would leave Jess behind; on the other hand, she's also a young girl completely out of her depth, mistaking use for love. No character is entirely off the hook or on it: Jess succumbs to temptation and tells the biggest mouth in school about Sari's secret fling ("I wanted to feel like I had something to say. Instead of listening all the time"), and she also sees the dastardly David Cole in a different light in the art class where he admires Jess' work as he struggles with his own. This is sharply knowing about the social repositioning and rearrangement of friendships new circumstances can bring, as well as the price the inexperienced can find themselves paying. The girls' eventual rapprochement may offer a more optimistic outcome than the often-unbreachable cleavages of real life, but that's all the more reason to find this satisfying as well as insightful. DS

FURGANG, KATHY *Flower Girl*; illus. by Harley Jessup. Viking, 2003 34p

ISBN 0-670-88950-4 \$15.99

Ad 3-6 yrs

While playing hide-and-seek at her grandmother's house, Anna overhears that she is to be the flower girl at Aunt Julie's wedding. Anna is dismayed; she'd much rather play outdoors and ride her bike than go to a wedding. When her aunt, mother, and grandmother begin taking gowns, gloves, veils, and old wedding pictures out of trunks in the attic, Anna becomes intrigued, finally deciding this wed-

ding business might not be so bad after all, even though she'd still rather play outside with her cousins. Kudos to Furgang for giving voice to those girls who aren't into girly pursuits like weddings and wearing flowers in their hair, but the narrative itself is disjointed and full of gaps, requiring quite a bit of inference on the part of the reader to discern the motivations behind both Anna's reluctance and her eventual capitulation. Fortunately, Jessup's illustrations help fill in the gaps and establish the tone; the colors are bold and the linework is spunky and energetic. While the flower-girl scenario may make readership interest a bit narrow, the book can open up more general discussions of the crazy things adults ask kids to do. KC

GILES, GAIL *Dead Girls Don't Write Letters*. Roaring Brook, 2003 [144p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-7613-2813-0 \$22.90
Trade ed. ISBN 0-7613-1727-9 \$15.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 7-12

Since the death of Sunny's sister, Jazz, Sunny's father has sunken further into his alcoholism and Sunny's mother is nearly comatose from depression and medication, but Sunny still finds the situation preferable to life in the shadow of magnetic, vicious Jazz. She therefore doesn't share her parents' joy when a letter from Jazz arrives revealing her survival, followed by the prodigal sister's return—except it's not really Jazz. Sunny's desperate mother doesn't seem to realize that the young woman is a very good imposter, but Sunny and her father, hiding their disbelief in front of Sunny's mother and not-Jazz, attempt to unravel the mystery of this strange interloper's appearance. The plot twists a bit too far and too fast, swapping some mystery for confusion in the speedy resolution, but the set up is a gripping one indeed. Giles (author of the compelling drama *Shattering Glass*, BCCB 5/02) makes the most of Sunny's dysfunctional family and Sunny's complicated identity formation in the face of such misdirection ("When the real Jazz left for New York, I knew my place in the world for the first time ever"), and there's not only delicious suspense in the unfolding of the plot but also some effective emotional issues: since the returned Jazz is definitely an improved model, does Sunny perhaps want her to stay and be the sister Jazz never was? Echoes of Duncan's *Summer of Fear* provide a good indication of the likely readers—Duncan fans and those who relish a taut, suspenseful enigma will find themselves right at home here. DS

GLIORI, DEBI *Flora's Surprise!*; written and illus. by Debi Gliori. Orchard, 2003 [26p]
ISBN 0-439-45590-1 \$15.95
Reviewed from galleys R 4-7 yrs

Flora is the littlest member of a bunny clan that loves to garden, and while her older sibs raise tulips, lettuce, and alfalfa sprouts, Flora takes a different approach, optimistically planting a brick in a flower pot in hopes of growing a house. Not surprisingly, her brick fails to make any progress towards house-ness, and Flora must contend not only with her siblings' depressingly spectacular horticultural results, but also with their skepticism and gentle condescension: "I think your brick is dead," said Sam. "It's NOT a BRICK!" wailed Flora. "IT'S A HOUSE!" However, Flora ultimately triumphs, much to the surprise of her family. Her potted brick does indeed produce a house . . . for a small black bird who chooses the pot as a nesting site. Flora's story is short and sweet (but not too sweet), and preschoolers and primary graders who have had their own creative ideas dismissed

by skeptical elders will easily sympathize with Flora's frustration and delight in her success. Gliori's cheery illustrations are bold enough in color (bright spring greens, oranges, and pinks are grounded with earthy brown tones) and composition to be enjoyed from across the room, yet they are also pleasingly delicate in their detailing. Gliori's nattily dressed bunny bunch are expressive, cuddly critters with creamy fur, large pink noses, and pink-lined floppy ears, and tiny Flora is particularly charming as she demurely inspects her siblings' plant projects and proudly totes her potted brick. Adults in need of fresh secular springtime fare for storytimes will find what they're looking for here. JMH

GREENSPUN, ADELE ARON *Ariel and Emily*; by Adele Aron Greenspun and Joanie Schwarz. Dutton, 2003 32p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-525-46861-7 \$12.99 M 2-4 yrs

Ariel and Emily, two girls on the verge of toddlerhood, are best friends doing best-friendy things. The text is essentially a list of things these best friends like to do: "Ariel and Emily love to go to the park"; "Sometimes Ariel and Emily play by themselves. But mostly they play together"; "Emily blows bubbles . . . and Ariel helps her pop them." Color-tinted, computer-enhanced photographs show the two girls in a grassy field, playing with balloons, making music, sharing "a squishy banana snack," and so forth. Each photograph is set on meringue-colored paper and framed by a faux-quilty border with scalloped edging, stripes, and flowers. The palette is subdued, and even the traditionally warm colors of yellow and pink are cooled by a prevalent olive green. Though the book could serve as a model for adults who want to create such objects as gifts for their own children, the sentimental, scrapbook nature of this offering makes it too personalized for most general audiences and too diluted for the age group it features. While it's true that young children often like to look at photographs of other young children, there are better picture books (such as Margaret Miller's *Guess Who?*, BCCB 9/94) to fill the bill. JMD

HARTNETT, SONYA *What the Birds See*. Candlewick, 2003 196p
ISBN 0-7636-2092-0 \$15.99 R Gr. 7-12

Three children have mysteriously vanished from the neighborhood, sending the media into a frenzy and parents into protective fits about the safety of their own offspring. Nine-year-old Adrian, however, seems to be doing his own kind of vanishing in a world increasingly uninterested in seeing him. Shunted from house to house since the emotional meltdown of his mother ("Like the bundle that gets handed about in the game of pass the parcel, he's been unwrapped and made smaller as he's been pushed from each to the next. He is haunted by the prospect of losing the last thin layer that protects him"), he's now living with his sharp-edged grandmother, who's resentful at having yet another unsatisfactory child to rear in the time she'd been hoping for some peace, and with his troubled young uncle, who's virtually housebound after a traumatic accident. With his meager relationships at school deteriorating, only his friendship with the three children across the way, especially bold Nicole, the eldest, sustains him. As usual, Hartnett offers a subtle, imaginative portrait rich in perception and implication; here she also uses her measured pace to add a chilling undertone to her depiction. Though there's little overt action, the step-by-step development of Adrian's dilemma (really the step-by-step eroding of Adrian) is taut and absorbing, and the book's cli-

max is no less tragic for its seeming inescapability. Young adult readers shouldn't be misled by the protagonist's age: there's enough horror behind the mundane face here to absorb any fan of psychological drama. DS

HAUSMAN, GERALD *Escape from Botany Bay: The True Story of Mary Bryant*; by Gerald and Loretta Hausman. Orchard, 2003 [224p]

ISBN 0-439-40327-8 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 6-10

Condemned to death for stealing a bonnet, nineteen-year-old Mary Broad is relieved to learn her sentence has been commuted to a fixed term in the new English penal colony to be established in Australia. Her relief is short-lived, though, when faced with the reality of filth, disease, and sexual predation aboard the prison hulk. Mary's status as mistress to one of the guards affords her a few privileges, but when she bears his child on the outward voyage, her best hope lies in a hasty marriage to Will Bryant, a fellow convict she had once met in England. Will's fishing expertise secures them a better living at Botany Bay than other deportees enjoy, but the couple are determined to escape; having weathered the hardships of an open craft at sea, they land in the relative safety of Timor, only to be taken into custody again after Will's alcohol-induced braggadocio attracts the attention of British officials. An epilogue follows the known fates of some of the main players, but this thin testament to the tale's veracity cannot quite compensate for the heavily fictionalized style into which Mary's story is cast. Though Mary is illiterate and impoverished, her narration is suspiciously well-spoken ("In my dreams I saw us break free of human tyranny—only to fight against a stronger opponent: Nature"), and the pretense of recounting her travails to her real-life advocate James Boswell crumbles when he himself necessarily enters her tale ("I wanted to believe his sincerity, but I couldn't. It seemed that all hope had just gone out of me"). Fictional liberties are stretched taut here, but adventure fans may be too engrossed in the grim, tense details to care. EB

HOLUB, JOAN *Why Do Rabbits Hop?: And Other Questions about Rabbits, Guinea Pigs, Hamsters, and Gerbils*; illus. by Anna DiVito and with photographs. Dial, 2003 48p (Dial Easy-to-Read)

Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-2771-2 \$13.99

Paper ed. ISBN 0-14-230120-5 \$3.99

R Gr. 2-4

Holub (author of *Why Do Dogs Bark?*, BCCB 2/01) turns here to smaller members of the pet world. Despite the title, this is more an overview than a behavioral exploration, using a question-and-answer format to describe characteristics of various furry critters and the husbandry thereof. Starting with rabbits, proceeding to guinea pigs, and then discussing hamsters and gerbils together, the book covers development and size as well as communication and favorite toys. Some basic questions are left unanswered (how long do any of these critters tend to live in captivity?), and information isn't always consistent from section to section (only hamsters and gerbils have suggested tricks provided). There's still plenty of information, though, and the emphasis on behavior and social needs will help youngsters envision day-to-day life with their pet beyond the basic fuzzy cuddles. DiVito provides a few lightly lined watercolors, but the real visual appeal comes from a panoply of furry photographs showing the subjects at their adorable best. This doesn't offer the depth of Wexler's single-species works or even the Silversteins' *Pocket Pets* (BCCB 4/00), but it's a winsome introduction to some less-fêted pets. DS

HUNTER, ERIN *Warriors: Into the Wild*. HarperCollins, 2003 272p
 Library ed. ISBN 0-06-052548-7 \$16.89
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-000002-3 \$15.99

Ad Gr. 5-8

Rusty is a housecat recruited by some warrior cats to leave his comfortable Twoleg home to join ThunderClan, a band of feral cats who live and hunt in a nearby forest along with three other rival clans (ShadowClan, RiverClan, and WindClan). After proving himself in battle, Rusty is adopted into ThunderClan, given a new name (Firepaw), and apprenticed to a mentor for training. Firepaw identifies with the fierce loyalties inherent to clan life, but as a former "kittypet" he is also more willing to step outside clan tradition, a fact which both helps and hinders his advancement. Inter-clan rivalry and intra-clan battles for power lead to acts of betrayal and murder, and only Firepaw realizes the true culprit: Tigerclaw, respected warrior and now deputy to leader Bluestar. The author's attempt to create a hierarchical warrior-clan society falls a bit short: neither the imagined world nor the characters within it are consistent or compelling. Characterization is limited essentially to each individual's function within the clan, and the cast therefore remains cartoon cats engaged in territory marking; the attempt to set up a cliffhanger lead-in to the next book in the series results in some strained plausibility at the end of this one. Still, this is essentially an action story, and while the pace occasionally flags there are a lot of bloody tooth-and-claw battles here that may engage readers of the Redwall series. JMD

JENKINS, STEVE *What Do You Do with a Tail Like This?*; written and illus. by Steve Jenkins and Robin Page. Houghton, 2003 [32p]
 ISBN 0-618-25628-8 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-8 yrs

Jenkins, capable illustrator of other early natural history (Collard's *Making Animal Babies*, BCCB 9/00), turns to a guessing game about anatomical function. Tandem spreads treat each body part, with the first posing the question ("What do you do with a nose like this?") and offering five examples cunningly positioned on the page so as to obscure the rest of their owners. A turn of the page not only reveals the animals in question (in this case, a platypus, a hyena, an elephant, a mole, and an alligator) but also offers brief answers to the question for each, outlining the special functions of each variant of the featured body part. The focus is somewhat scattershot, but there's some thoughtful evocation of the breadth of the animal kingdom's capabilities (an appendix provides detailed descriptions that expand on the succinct in-text comments), and the guessing game will in itself stimulate participation and the interest of young biologists. Jenkins' cut-paper collage illustrations are, as usual, ingenious and remarkable in their clarity, their several components neatly articulating the anatomy of their subjects. With some kind of critter for everyone, this will be useful for entry-level natural history. DS

KELLER, EMILY SNOWELL, ad. *Sleeping Bunny*; illus. by Pamela Silin-Palmer. Random House, 2003 [34p]
 Library ed. ISBN 0-375-91541-9 \$18.99
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-375-81541-4 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 6-9 yrs

A cast of rabbits, both royal and fey, hop through this adaptation of a favorite fairy tale. A good king and queen (bunnies both) have no children ("which was highly

unusual in their family!”), but finally their longing is rewarded with Princess Bunny, whom they love “from the tips of her silky ears to the ends of her dainty white paws.” Lack of appropriate tableware (eight fairies, seven golden plates) results in the deadly wrath of Mildew, the uninvited eighth, falling on the bunny baby princess; luckily the gift of the seventh fairy, Primrose, turns death into a century-long nap. Princess Bunny is awakened at the appropriate moment by the appropriate prince, and the two “grew to truly love each other and eventually decided to marry.” All the fairies are invited to the wedding, even Mildew, and she gifts the happy couple with “a magnificent set of *eight* golden plates”; subsequently “everyone lived happily ever after.” While there’s no real wit in substituting rabbits for humans without much more textual play, there are clever moments in Silin-Palmer’s lushly romanticized paintings, especially in the mottoes and crests on the royal shields and in the royal rabbits’ couture. Meanwhile, an overabundance of piggy sprites, magical rainbows, and serving rodents crowd pages adorned with enough twinkly sparkles and effusive blossoms to push the oft overwrought visuals over the top. Young romantics may be miffed at this rabbitry revision, but less sensitive souls are bound to laugh out loud at least once or twice. JMD

KROSOCZKA, JARRETT J. *Bubble Bath Pirates!*; written and illus. by Jarrett J. Krosoczka. Viking, 2003 34p
ISBN 0-670-03599-8 \$15.99

R* 3-6 yrs

See this month’s Big Picture, p. 263, for review.

LEE, HO BAEK *While We Were Out*; written and illus. by Ho Baek Lee. Kane/ Miller, 2003 [32p]
ISBN 1-929132-44-1 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R* 3-6 yrs

When the people are away, the rabbit will play, at least according to this new South Korean import. After the human family departs for an overnight, the house bunny decides to take this opportunity to explore the intricate details of human habitation and play house human for a bit. She digs through the refrigerator, enjoys a late-night video with bag of snacks in hand, plays dressup, arranges for a bit of in-line skating, and finally hops back to her official quarters just in time to leave her family none the wiser—except for the rabbit pellets decorously scattered about the house. The fantasy is all the more charming for its serene domesticity and careful limits (grabbing titles off a bookshelf, “the rabbit opens one, but she doesn’t understand it”), which cleverly bring the rabbit’s adventures just a hop away from plausibility; the sweetly confiding tone of the text makes it pretty warm and fuzzy in its own right. A copyright-page image and caption suggest that Lee is a veteran roommate of rabbits, and his knowledge imbues his illustrations with effective detail that anchor the whimsy: yes, it’s a hoot to see the rabbit trying on lipstick or scooting down the hall on a skate, but she’s got serious lapine charm even at rest. Softly granular line creates a rabbit reminiscent of some of John Burningham’s bunnies, with shapes emphasized by the restrained palette (many spreads are almost monochromatic, using only gentle grays and taupes to deepen the shadows, making the splashier, red-touched antics all the louder). The rabbit-poop ending will tickle audiences and readers-aloud alike, and the irreverent on both sides will particularly relish reexamining the pages and noting en route where

the bunny leaves her little presents. Cuddly, determined preschoolers will bond with this cuddly, determined rabbit. DS

LEVINE, KAREN *Hana's Suitcase: A True Story*. Whitman, 2003 [111p] illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-8075-3148-0 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-7

Based on a radio documentary by the author, this is the dramatic story of Hana Brady, a Czechoslovakian Jewish girl who was murdered at Auschwitz and whose suitcase—half a century later—led the director of the Tokyo Holocaust Center, Fumiko Ishioka, to document Hana's brief life. Alternating chapters describe Hana's experience and Ishioka's pursuit of information about it, illustrated with black-and-white photographs of Hana, her brother, George (the only survivor in the family), her concentration camp drawings, and the Japanese involved at the Center. The text is well written, moving, and accessible; the photos are involving and the format is well designed. Tonally, the book raises some questions. Ishioka's search reads like an exciting mystery; her jubilation at making progress toward the discovery of Hana's fate is oddly juxtaposed with the tragedy itself and even suggests a happy ending of hope for a peaceful future, when in fact there was no such thing for either Hana or the other 15,000 children deported from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz. Moreover, although the introduction does mention Japan as "a country allied with Nazi Germany during the Second World War," Levine never develops the connection. This is a dimension that would have deepened readers' understanding of the poignancy and irony of Ishioka's search, not to mention their understanding of political complexity and of inhumanity as more than an isolated case of Nazi racism. Despite these omissions, the book works well as a carefully researched representation of the Holocaust that is not too overwhelming for elementary-school students to handle, so long as they have adult guidance for broader historical context. BH

LITTLE, JEAN *Willow and Twig*. Viking, 2003 227p

ISBN 0-670-88856-7 \$15.99

Ad Gr. 5-7

Twelve-year-old Willow, part Canadian Indian, and five-year-old Twig, part Caribbean Black, have been abandoned repeatedly by their drug-addicted mother and have never known either of their respective fathers. Willow has always taken care of her deaf, emotionally disturbed little brother, and when their temporary caregiver dies, Willow manages, through the Vancouver police, to contact her grandmother in Ontario. Gram brings both children to her old farmhouse and eventually heals them, securing their safety with permanent custody. The main characters are predictable though clearly rendered. Gram and her brother (a blind children's book writer whose story character, Red Mouse, stars in Willow's fantasies from early memories of Gram's house) show preternatural sensitivity, often second-guessing what Willow has on her mind, just as Willow penetrates her great-aunt's obnoxious façade to the fear and insecurity behind it. Walk-on characters, especially the good-hearted Chinese policeman and the mean-spirited Anglo policewoman, are functional if clichéd. The plot outlines tough contemporary problems but supplies the reassuring, old-fashioned guarantee of a happy ending. Fans of Little's many previous books will know what to expect and will find the theme of orphan rescue appealing. BH

MACK, TODD *Princess Penelope*; illus. by Julia Gran. Scholastic, 2003 [32p]
ISBN 0-439-22436-5 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 4-6 yrs

Penelope believes she's a princess (a fact she is willing to announce to all and sundry at any given moment) because she has her very own bed in her very own room just like a princess, she changes her outfits many times daily just like a princess, she has lots of thrones just like a princess, she make rules just like a princess, and so on. The author has painted a lively personality portrait of a rambunctious little girl with a terrific sense of her own self. Unfortunately, while the book is chock-full of all the reasons Penelope is certain she is a princess, it isn't chock-full of story: despite the visual and textual energy, nothing much happens, and there's no tension or resolution. Gran's swirly and design-intense watercolors recall Rocky and Bullwinkle's *Fractured Fairy Tale* cartoons: characters with pop eyes, squiggly eyelashes, and rampant tresses run amok on pages awash with an overabundance of pink and fuchsia. Though audiences may prefer princesses with more active lifestyles (such as those in Lester's *Princess Penelope's Parrot*, BCCB 1/97, or Munsch's *Paper Bag Princess*, to name only two), there is a certain hyper-vigor to both Penelope and her visual representation that may suit hyper-pretend princesses just fine. JMD

MACPHAIL, CATHERINE *Dark Waters*. Bloomsbury, 2003 176p
ISBN 1-58234-846-4 \$15.95

R Gr. 5-9

Col is a loyal McCann; his older brother, Mungo, a local hoodlum with a reputation for violence, takes after their deceased father, and Col isn't too far behind. He has no intention of being a hero when he cuts school for a winter stroll by a frozen loch, but when reckless ten-year-old Dominic Sampson falls through the thin ice, Col can't stop himself: "The boy was sobbing now, and Col tried to blot out his anguished cries. 'Please! Please! Somebody help me!' Not me. Not me, was all Col could think. Definitely not *me!* In the same instant he was running, pulling off his jacket, running towards the boy in the icy loch—and changing his life forever." Waking up in the hospital with vague, horrific memories of being underwater, Col is shortly overwhelmed by the understandable gratitude of Dominic and his well-to-do family. What he is most surprised by, however, is the community's change toward him: he is no longer the brother of a two-bit hood doomed to repeat the family pattern but a hero who is obviously made of finer stuff. The conflict between Col's changed present/potential future and his difficult past forms the crux of this novel. His moral confusion is set in relief by his increasing fondness for the effervescent Dominic, as well as his growing sympathy for Klaus, an illegal alien secretly living in an abandoned bomb shelter, who is just the type of person Mungo would see as fair game. This is a fast-moving, pithily written moral tale that would make an arresting chapter-by-chapter readaloud. A concluding supernatural revelation could have been an awkward contrivance, but MacPhail integrates it into the story with hardly a ripple and makes it the well-spring for Col's own redemption. JMD

MBUTHIA, WAITHIRA *My Sister's Wedding: A Story of Kenya*; illus. by Geoffrey Gacheru Karanja. Soundprints, 2003 32p

ISBN 1-56899-896-1 \$15.95

Ad 6-9 yrs

Ten-year-old Mbui is very close to her older sister, Wangari, but she knows that

soon her sister will leave to marry, since her future husband's proposal has been accepted. Despite the excited preparations of relatives in their small Kenyan village, Mbui remains sad at her sister's impending departure; the festivities of the wedding day (traditionally a surprise to the bride) and some quiet sisterly counsel, however, help Mbui be happy for her sister and adjust to family life without her. The text is tender but straightforward, keeping the sisterly relationship enough in the foreground to escape an overly touristy approach; it's also an amiable introduction to a tradition that will be unfamiliar to most youngsters, especially with its focus on the Gikuyu people rather than the more commonly featured Maasai. Unfortunately, the art falls below the text's standard: though Wangari has a queenly carriage, other figures are drafted without grace or character, leaving clothes as their only identifying feature (Mbui looks old enough to be Wangari's mother at times) and their stiffly arranged limbs as their only vehicle for expression; thick paints muddy and homogenize people and landscapes. This would nonetheless be a pleasant addition to various curricular units, and it'll give young wedding junkies a broader view of their favorite ceremony. A brief discussion of Kenya and wedding traditions is appended, along with a glossary. DS

McKISSACK, PATRICIA C. *Tippy Lemmey*; illus. by Susan Keeter. Aladdin, 2003 59p (Ready for Chapters)

Library ed. ISBN 0-689-85594-X \$11.89

Paper ed. ISBN 0-689-85019-0 \$3.99

R Gr. 2-4

Tippy Lemmey "was the only dog I ever knew who had a first and last name," says narrator Leandra; Tippy Lemmey also apparently has a grudge against Leandra and her friends, Paul and Jeannie, since every time the kids bike past his yard the dog takes after them, growling and snapping. Mr. and Mrs. Lemmey, who are keeping Tippy for their son (away fighting in the Korean War), do their best to assure the kids of Tippy's friendliness and restrain him from frightening them, but to the trio, Tippy remains a "living, breathing monster"—until one day he needs their help. That plot twist, wherein Tippy falls prey to dognappers, is the weak spot in an otherwise strong and solid early-grades drama that understands the ruin a scary dog can make of eight-year-old lives. There's also humor throughout, even in the acknowledgment of adult cluelessness about such a difficulty (Leandra's protective parents initially think their daughter is being bullied by the Lemmeyes' son, making for a comedic scene at the Lemmeyes'), and the style is easygoing and confiding; the trio's friendship recalls the reliable comradeship of Ann Cameron's Huey and Gloria. Young readers will know that not all such canine obstacles are conveniently tamed by the end, but they'll be glad that the plucky companions are rewarded with Tippy's loyalty. Black-and-white illustrations using pencil lines to add texture to fluid wash add a vivid reality to the story. DS

McNEAL, LAURA *Zipped*; by Laura and Tom McNeal. Knopf, 2003 [256p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-375-91491-9 \$17.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-375-81491-4 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-12

Mick is stunned to discover trashed e-mail from his beloved stepmother, Nora, that indicates she's cheating on Mick's father. He's furious with Nora but he's also uncertain about his response, since he's hoping to confirm his suspicions and identify her paramour, but also to protect his father. Nora isn't the only perplexing

woman in his life: he's trying to get up the nerve to ask out redheaded Lisa Doyle, and he's not sure of the meaning of his friendship with a beautiful college girl. Meanwhile, Lisa has strains of her own: her creepy Saturday-job supervisor is sexually harassing employees and embarking on a relationship with Lisa's best friend, while Lisa's interest in Mick is complicated by her yearning for a handsome Mormon missionary. There are still more plot strands in this broadly scoped novel, but the relaxed pace gives all the elements a chance to shine apart and together without eclipsing the primary narrative light. Readers familiar with their literary history will guess the identity of Nora's amour early on from the clues provided, but that's not really the point: it's Mick's growth as he comes up to his sixteenth birthday, having some maturation forced upon him and choosing to match it with more of his own. There's a realism here that takes the narrative beyond the problem novel and into one of relationships, their difficult demands in the face of human complexity and frailty, and their nonetheless often satisfying rewards. The book never loses sight of the kids at the heart of this, however, which keeps this accessible to the teens it's about. DS

MURPHY, MARY *The Alphabet Keeper*; written and illus. by Mary Murphy. Knopf, 2003 28p
Library ed. ISBN 0-375-92347-0 \$16.99
Trade ed. ISBN 0-375-82347-6 \$14.95 R Gr. 1-3

The Alphabet Keeper usually keeps her letters carefully caged, but one day during cage cleaning her charges take off and escape through an opened window ("Come back!" screams the Alphabet Keeper, but too late"). She pursues them, but the clever letters use their talents to elude her—for instance, when she chases them in a bus, the letter h flies down and turns her conveyance into a bush, and when she shouts at them to stop, the letters "jump backward and *stop* changes into *pots*, which fall on her." The book somewhat loses control of the concept at the end (if all the letters have gone to the moon on a rocket, what does that mean about language on earth?), but this is a lively and playful word fantasy. The writing is homey yet fluid, reaching beyond its game for continued sources of humor (kids will particularly enjoy the Alphabet Keeper's falling over the edge converted from the hedge and, of course, the plummeting pots), and the wordplay employs sufficiently simple and familiar terms that beginning readers will find the game itself a pleasant change from skills and drills. Murphy's tidy art keeps the fantasy satisfyingly down to earth, with trim black outlines anchoring the solid figures and even the fantastic alphabet personified with restraint (each letter has an eye and a small Pac-Manesque mouth, but they're definitely more a significant collective than a motley crew). Sharp-eyed readers will be tickled to catch some of the additional commentary in the fleeing alphabet (they run particularly to ejaculations and action words), and there are plenty of possibilities for stimulating use in language-arts classes. DS

MUTH, JON J, ad. *Stone Soup*; ad. and illus. by Jon J Muth. Scholastic, 2003 [32p]
ISBN 0-439-33909-X \$16.95
Reviewed from galleys R 5-8 yrs

Three wandering monks (Hok, Lok, and Siew) discuss various issues while they travel, until finally Hok, the youngest monk, asks the oldest, "What makes one

happy, Siew?" In search of an answer, the three men come upon a village that has fallen on hard times: "These people do not know happiness," they all agreed. "But today," said Siew, his face bright as the moon, "we will show them how to make stone soup." Those familiar with versions of this traditional tale will know what follows: intrigued by the notion of soup made from stones, each villager contributes from his or her own meager store until a rich and nourishing soup, enough to feed everyone, becomes the center of a long-overdue community feast. Muth sets his retelling of this tale in ancient China, using "the Buddha story tradition, where tricksters spread enlightenment rather than seeking gain for themselves." He pushes the moral just a bit instead of allowing the story to speak for itself ("How giving the villagers had become!"; "You have shown us that sharing makes us all richer"), but overall the retelling is comfortably conversational and easy to read aloud. Muth's watercolors are balanced and graceful, making the most of fluidly lined figures, architectural details, and airy white space. The three Zen monks are called by the names of Chinese deities that bestow health, wealth, and prosperity; the art includes symbols from Eastern culture, explained in the author's note. JMD

NIX, GARTH *Abhorsen*. EOS/HarperCollins, 2003 358p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027826-9 \$18.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027825-0 \$17.99

R Gr. 7-12

Lirael, the Abhorsen-in-Waiting, joined forces with her nephew Sameth (a.k.a. Sam), charter mage and Wallmaker, in *Lirael* (BCCB 5/01), and now the powerful dyad returns to fulfill its destiny in the third volume of this fantasy series. In a stunning opening Nix uses a particularly ruthless and meticulously planned assassination in Ancelstierre (the modern, technological, non-magic world across the wall from the magical Old Kingdom) to set the stage for the final battle between the forces of life and death, good and evil. Meanwhile, in the Old Kingdom, Lirael and Sam race against time to keep evil necromancer Hedge from releasing an ancient and destructive being long ago imprisoned by the mythological Seven. While *Lirael* had moments of relative calm, this title is more than three hundred pages of breathless chases, near escapes, and intense confrontations. Accompanied by Free Magic beings (the Disreputable Dog, Lirael's loyal canine companion from the Great Library at Clayr, and Mogget, a most disreputable cat from the castle of the Abhorsen), Sam and Lirael battle their way across a devastated countryside and through the river of Death to save their world from total annihilation. This title has a cinematic sweep that pushes everything along before it; the tense, climactic confrontation at the boundary wall has a monumental scope that pulls threads from the very beginning of the series into a tightly constructed, satisfying conclusion. Nix's intricately imagined fantasy world is peopled by complex players worthy of both their dramatic backdrops and their moral dilemmas. There is just enough space left at the end of this title to make another entry in the series possible; here's hoping. JMD

O'CONNOR, BARBARA *Fame and Glory in Freedom, Georgia*. Foster/Farrar, 2003 [112p]

ISBN 0-374-32258-9 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-7

All that stands between Burdette "Bird" Weaver and the Spelling Bee first-prize trip to Disney World is her incompetence at spelling, and all that stands between

her and a friendship with newcomer Harlem Tate is his reluctance to be befriended. These are but trivial obstacles to one so determined as Bird, who, encouraged by her neighbor and idol Miss Delphine, finds a way to combine the challenges and realize at least the better half of her ambition. While O'Connor follows Bird's twin assaults on a tough vocabulary list and dour Harlem's reticence, she also reveals the subtle interplay among the members of fictional Freedom, Georgia's suffocatingly close community, where the residents may know a bit too much about one another's business, but quiet acts of neighborliness compensate. Bird's strong will and good nature are reminiscent of Opal in DiCamillo's *Because of Winn-Dixie* (BCCB 6/00), and like that other young heroine, Bird not only takes responsibility for securing her own happiness but draws together the adult community around her, indirectly but effectively matchmaking spinster Miss Delphine with the local tattoo artist and bringing light back in to the life of town recluse Mr. Moody, who's also Harlem's father. In the end there may not be a trip to the Mouse House in view for Bird, but she's well satisfied with her new best friend Harlem, and readers will be too. EB

O'GARDEN, IRENE *The Scrubbly-Bubbly Car Wash*; illus. by Cynthia Jabar. HarperCollins, 2003 [26p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-029486-8 \$16.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-694-00871-0 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 3-6 yrs

"What do we get for driving far?! A crusty, dusty, dirty car." So the limo-length family sedan pulls into the Scrubbly Bubbly Car Wash and antes up for a good shower and rinse: "Steamy sprays beyond the brushes/ rinse us down in luscious rushes/ at the drippity-droppity, bottom to toppity,/ lathery-blathery, scrubbly-bubbly CAR WASH!" Steen and Karas' *Car Wash* (BCCB 1/01) is, arguably, the gold standard against which legions of car-wash books will henceforth be measured, and Jabar's bubble-gum-hued scenes seem fairly prosaic next to that deep-sea adventure. The view is strictly from the outside looking in, and that perspective cannot replicate the delightful shivers of claustrophobia that are the real draw for car-wash cruisers. There may be some technical confusion, too, over the depiction of water drops stretched by the dryer, which look more like streaks of dirty green paint, and a vacuum hose that appears to be spewing water rather than sucking in air. Still, this title has its moments, from the posted levels of service (Bubbly, Scrubbly Bubbly, and Super Fly Scrubbly Bubbly) to the fantasy architecture of the enterprise itself—a huge, pink, sunglassed head (constructed, no doubt, of fiberglass, ca. 1955) that swallows cars in its mouth and belches them out from the other side. Kids who need gentle coaxing for their first drive-through wash-and-wax should find this reassuring. EB

PENNAC, DANIEL *Eye of the Wolf*; tr. by Sarah Adams; illus. by Max Grafe. Candlewick, 2003 111p

ISBN 0-7636-1896-9 \$15.99

M Gr. 3-6

The one-eyed wolf largely ignores the zoo visitors he encounters—the mothers who warn their children about him, the artists who sketch him, even the keeper who feeds him—but he cannot ignore the boy who comes every day and stares at him. After the two lock gazes, they become psychically linked to one another. In the eye of the wolf, the boy sees the animal's memories: the wolf is Blue Wolf, son

of Black Flame, caught when he rescued his sister from trappers. The wolf looks into the boy's eye and discovers his past, too: the boy is Africa N'Bia, orphan, former slave, storyteller, and friend to animals. His adopted father works at the zoo, and there the boy reunites with all the animals he has bonded with in his eventful life, animals which, by coincidence or fate, are all in this same zoo. There are some lovely fragments in this import, first published in France in 1982, but there is little to hold the pieces together. The plotting is purposive and contrived; the pace is slow, and most of the action occurs in the misty and mystical past. The point seems deliberately obscured; it is hard to say whether this story is about two lost beings finding each other, about the need to be closer to nature, or about something else altogether. As an allegory the tale lacks clarity, and as a fable it lacks a moral conclusion. Full-page black-and-white mixed media illustrations by Max Grafe add a somber resonance to the text. JMD

PERRY, ANDREA *Here's What You Do When You Can't Find Your Shoe (Ingenious Inventions for Pesky Problems)*; illus. by Alan Snow. Atheneum, 2003 32p
ISBN 0-689-83067-X \$16.95 R Gr. 3-6

Troubled by shoe loss, excessive vegetables, fluff between the toes, or crumbs in the bed? Perry's perky poems introduce helpful solutions to these and other dilemmas, describing a splendid machine ("The Sure-Footed Shoe Finder"), helpful spray ("Veggies Be Gone!"), invaluable product ("Filbert's Footsie Floss"), obliging pets ("The Crumbunny"), and other assistive possibilities for a total of a dozen aids to everyday living. This is definitely high-spirited verse of the light variety, enhanced by Seussian silliness and a seasoning of sophistication in both its baroque creations and gleeful infomercial style. Some of the less reality-based entries get a bit too much lighter than air, but there's a winning kid's-eye-view jocularity to the creations that might genuinely be useful to enterprising youngsters. Snow's illustrations make the most of the long, thin trim size and the Rube-Goldbergian possibilities of the subjects. Sober black lines and textural crosshatching suggest technical diagrams while geometric balance suggests sweet reason, but the beak-nosed figures capably demonstrating the products are clearly denizens of a ridiculous world. This would also be suitable as a readaloud for younger audiences, or use it to inspire youngsters to describe their own madcap inventions. DS

POSTHUMA, SIEB *Benny*; written and illus. by Sieb Posthuma. Kane/Miller, 2003 [26p]
ISBN 1-929132-43-3 \$15.95
Reviewed from galleys R 4-7 yrs

When a young dog can't find his precious bone, that's the first sign that something is wrong with Benny. Walking indifferently through a field of flowers, past the deliciously scented bakery, and all the rich smells of home (including the "wonderful, filthy dog poop") makes him realize that something's gone wrong with his sniffer. Benny's worried mother hustles him off to the doctor, who uses all his technical expertise to diagnose a cold, from which Benny fortunately recovers in a few days. The plot is a bit straggly in places (the shift from the lost-toy focus to the not-well focus may confuse a few audience members), but the story of sickness and recuperation has enough doggy humor to satisfy the bedbound and energetically healthy alike, and the matter-of-fact approach to ill health and recovery will reassure as well as providing an opportunity for further discussion. There's a touch of

Susan Meddaugh's Martha to flop-eared, runny-nosed little Benny, and inventive elements enliven the personable line-and-watercolor art: an underground cross-section of Benny's digging ambitions reveals a blind mole with glasses and cane, the doctor's technology involves elaborate loops of a wonderfully baroque "Sniff Machine," Benny's mother comfortingly scratches her son's head as they visit the doctor. Sickbed residents still restless after a dose of Wells' *Felix Feels Better* (BCCB 6/01) will find this helpful followup medicine. DS

REEDER, CAROLYN *Before the Creeks Ran Red*. HarperCollins, 2003 370p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-623616-9 \$17.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-623615-0 \$16.99

Ad Gr. 5-9

The opening salvos, skirmishes, and maneuvers of the Civil War are seen here through the eyes of three fictional teens who "witnessed" the action at Fort Sumter, Baltimore, and Alexandria. "Timothy Donovan's Story" centers on a young bugler who watches his cushy job sounding calls to order turn perilous as the federal fort is attacked by South Carolina militia. "Joseph Schwartz's Story" picks up three days later in Baltimore, when Union troops are mobbed by rebel sympathizers as they pass through the city on the way to Washington, D.C. "Gregory Howard's Story" follows immediately after as Alexandria, Virginia comes under Union occupation. The three tales amount to little more than thinly plotted mini-history lessons, with the boys racing along the periphery of the action, reporting at length to family and friends—and, too obviously, readers—on what they've seen ("... so now that they've taken over Annapolis, they can control the Chesapeake Bay. And that means Baltimore is cut off from the South"). Reeder does, however, bring some under-examined political issues (such as Lincoln's suspension of *habeas corpus* in occupied Maryland) into the light, and for that alone Civil War buffs may want to invest some time here. EB

RODDA, EMILY *Fairy Realm: The Charm Bracelet*; illus. by Raoul Vitale. HarperCollins, 2003 [128p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-009584-9 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-009583-0 \$8.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 2-4

Jessie is visiting her grandmother in the house called Blue Moon. Her mother, Rosemary, wants Granny to move to the city with them, but Jessie does not want her grandmother to leave Blue Moon, a house she has believed magical since her childhood. Now, however, Jessie's grandmother has fallen and sprained her wrist, and Rosemary is using that as an excuse to move Granny back to the city. More is wrong than just a sprained wrist, however—Granny's charm bracelet is missing, and with it seems to have gone Granny's memories as well. Jessie's efforts to find the bracelet prove fruitless until the night she answers a call from the garden and finds herself pulled through a door into the magical Realm. There she discovers that her grandmother is fairy royalty, and that she and she alone can renew the Realm's magic and thus save it from the wicked beings who threaten it. Originally published in Australia, this is a change from Rodda's more adventurous Rowan of Rin series (BCCB 6/01, etc.). While the exposition is predictable, the momentum builds from the scene-setting opening and the action does finally take over the somewhat derivative plot. This doesn't have quite the lure of Kathleen Duey's *The Unicorn's Secret: Moonsilver* (BCCB 1/02), but transitional readers seeking a magical niche will pause comfortably here. Final illustrations not seen. JMD

SANDERSON, RUTH *Saints: Lives & Illuminations*; written and illus. by Ruth Sanderson. Eerdmans, 2003 40p
ISBN 0-8028-5220-3 \$20.00 M Gr. 3-6

Lives of forty Christian saints of the first millennium are briefly examined in single-page treatments, accompanied by ornately bordered, "holy card"-styled portraits. The entries, chronologically organized by century, are generally concise and direct, but the composition is often awkward, with word repetitions, undefined terminology ("Catherine is one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers"), and puzzling juxtapositions ("Basil had a kind and sympathetic soul and was truly a humble leader. When necessary, he engaged in battle against the enemies of the Church"). Coverage is inconsistent (readers learn that Brendan is the patron of sailors but never—tsk, tsk—that Jerome is the patron of librarians), legend is seldom distinguished from fact, important report data such as feast dates are omitted, and source notes are nonexistent. Even the romanticized pictures are unconvincing, from the depiction of Ethiopian slave Saint Moses with lightly bronzed skin and delicate Anglicized facial features, to the twin saints Benedict and Scholastica, so wildly disparate in visage that they could be father and daughter. Well-to-do saints are clad in fairy-tale garb, impoverished saints are crisply ironed and tidy, and even emaciated hermit Maty of Egypt sports a particularly form fitting off-the-shoulder animal skin. Brevity and sumptuous glitz may hold some appeal for browsers, but children researching their namesakes are unlikely to find this very illuminating. EB

SCHANZER, ROSALYN *How Ben Franklin Stole the Lightning*; written and illus. by Rosalyn Schanzer. HarperCollins, 2003 34p
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-16994-5 \$17.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-16993-7 \$16.99 Ad 6-9 yrs

A life as ambitious as Franklin's calls for biographical focus and, with a nod to his other pursuits, Schanzer zeroes in on the great man's accomplishments as experimenter, tinkerer, and inventor. The text rambles through a haphazard litany of discoveries and inventions, tenuously strung together with teasing references to how he "stole lightning" (i.e., performed his famous kite-in-a-storm experiment) and "his most famous invention of all—the lightning rod!" Youngsters unacquainted with Franklin may take exception to this "most famous invention" claim and may, after hearing about his other feats, decide that other contributions eclipse Schanzer's choice. The tone is intimate and chatty, well adapted for sharing aloud, and a leisurely reader with time to discuss the inventions along the way can make the best of the problematic organization. Lighthearted, cartoony illustrations in which a miniature Franklin bounds gleefully among his inventions keep the proceedings rolling, and anyone with the attention span to absorb more information can consult the author's hefty end note. Consider this as a supplement to David Adler's introduction, *A Picture Book of Benjamin Franklin*. EB

SCHOTTER, RONI *In the Piney Woods*; illus. by Kimberly Bulcken Root. Kroupal/Farrar, 2003 [32p]
ISBN 0-374-33623-7 \$16.00
Reviewed from galleys R 5-7 yrs

In a warm extended family of Grandpa, Mama, Papa, pregnant Big Sister Sada, and her husband, Sam, young Ella is closest to her grandfather, who in his last year

goes from slow spring walks to the “sandy, piney woods, near the sea” to confinement in a rocking chair through the summer as his health deteriorates. The central action springs from the pitch pinecones, which, he has told Ella, will not release their seeds until the woods catch fire. Finally a storm brings lightning, “a sizzle, a hiss, and a burst of flame,” burning the old trees to leave room for new ones to grow. Indeed, after Grandpa’s death in autumn, Sada’s baby is born, with a place in Grandpa’s room and Ella’s heart as she plans to take him to the pinewoods to see the “tiny trees . . . rising, green and strong and straight,” one of them beside Grandpa’s grave where Ella planted a fire-burst pinecone. In a wisely balanced graphic decision, Root’s watercolors focus more on the people than the trees, lightening the symbolic load. Her deep blues and greens pull us in, while human figures and diagonal compositions often tug us to the right, emphasizing action in a way that keeps the extended metaphor and poetic language from becoming static. The narrative itself is idyllic but well pitched, with enough pace to keep listeners following Ella through her growing awareness of life cycles. This is a moving story that adults would do well to read aloud with the expectation of cathartic tears, especially among children who have experienced a death in the family. BH

SCHWARTZ, AMY *What James Likes Best*; written and illus. by Amy Schwartz. Jackson/Atheneum, 2003 32p
ISBN 0-689-84059-4 \$16.95

R 3-6 yrs

James is an adventurous soul, traveling to four different destinations four different ways: by bus to visit the twins, by taxi to see his grandmother and aunt, by car to the county fair, and by foot to a play date with his friend, Angela. The events of each brief excursion are precisely communicated, and at the end of each section Schwartz includes a simple question: “And what do you think James liked best?” The question is followed by suggested answers for readers and listeners to discuss—such as, in the first section, “Was it the robin? Or the toy fruit? Or the muffin? Or was it Angela?” James’ excursions are a preschool panoply of treats, from the green and white stripes on the express bus to the little fork with which James eats cheese, from the windshield wipers on his mother’s car to the muffin he eats at Angela’s house, and the book includes enough different modes of transportation to make would-be travelers wiggle with glee. Schwartz’s pristine illustrations are streamlined and clean; the lucid, transparent colors make her gouache and pen-and-ink illustrations (sans crosshatching and other details) seem almost weightless. This is a terrifically simple, successful way to get readers and listeners to interact with printed text. Whether you read it aloud to a group or use it one-on-one, make sure to leave time for discussion among budding debaters. JMD

SHANGE, NTOZAKE *Daddy Says*. Simon, 2003 [192p]
ISBN 0-689-83081-5 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

M Gr. 6-9

Fourteen-year-old Annie Sharon and her little sister, Lucie-Marie, miss their rodeo-champion mother terribly, but Annie Sharon in particular is also angry that their mother’s wild ways ended up with her losing her life in an accident. Since they’re still a rodeo family, the constant reminders of the girls’ mother are everywhere (they still keep her favorite horse, the stallion that killed her), but Tie-Down, their father, finds those memories too painful to share with his children. Annie Sharon is determined to come to grips with her mother’s legacy, however, and this leads

her not only to reject the maternal overtures of her father's girlfriend, Cassie, but also to engage in her own dangerously wild behavior. Shange (author of *Muhammad Ali*, BCCB 12/02) offers some well-meant material about the history of black cowboys and African-American rodeo stars, and it's refreshing to see this rarely treated sport as the central point. Unfortunately, the narrative is unfocused and awkward, with explanation substituting for evocation of emotion and character and with little logic to most of the events; as a consequence, there's little involvement with the characters or investment in their fates. The book also seems uncomfortable with rodeo and confused about its practices, and cliché is piled upon cliché in the drama of Annie Sharon's attempt to master her mother's dangerous horse ("Too much spirit, that's his problem. . . . Maybe she loved him so much 'cause they were just alike"). Readers looking for rodeo-flavored materials will be better served by Ferris' *Eight Seconds* (BCCB 10/00) or Lynn Hall's *Flying Changes* (7/91). DS

SHANNON, GEORGE *Tippy-Toe Chick, Go!*; illus. by Laura Dronzek. Greenwillow, 2003 [32p]

Library ed. ISBN 06-029824-3 \$16.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-029823-5 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

R 3-6 yrs

Every morning, Hen and her three chicks eschew chicken feed in favor of more appetizing breakfast foods found in the nearby garden—"sweet itty-bitty beans and potato bugs." One day, they find their way blocked by a seriously grumpy dog. When Hen informs her chicks that there will be no beans that day, the angry children pull out all the kid stops—"We're hungry!" "You promised!" "We DID our chores!"—and decide to take things into their own hands. In an inverted Billy Goats Gruff scenario, Big Chick tries first with diplomacy, and Middle Chick follows up with threats. When their efforts fail, Little Chick steps up and uses her tippy-toe running technique (developed as a result of dawdling on her way to the garden every morning and having to catch up) to entangle the dog in his own rope, leaving him "too mad to think 'back up.'" The family then follows their diminutive heroine safely past the bewildered dog to enjoy their breakfast treat. The simple, lyrical text contains just enough repetition to make for an interactive read-aloud; beginning readers will also enjoy mimicking the angry dog and the chicks. Dronzek's jewel-tone spreads, sequential strip narratives, and isolated caricatures deftly add a warm, subtle humor to the text. Her densely saturated acrylics with bold black outlines masterfully articulate characters' emotions through just the right angle of head or wing. This is a distinctly humorous narrative that will charm hungry young audiences. KC

SHELDON, DYAN *Planet Janet*. Candlewick, 2003 223p

ISBN 0-7636-2048-3 \$14.99

Ad Gr. 7-10

Sixteen-year-old Janet, disturbed by the superficiality of the world and especially her family ("I have a Questing, Artistic Soul, and if I don't get away from all this mundane crap, it will wither and die like a flower in a desert"), decides that it's time for her Dark Phase. To this end, she and her friend Disha are going to engage in serious, soul-searching activities and explore the black side of their wardrobes, and Janet will document all her spiritual exploration in a diary. What the diary really chronicles is Janet's complaints about her parents, "Sigmund" (Dad's a psychotherapist) and the Mad Cow, and her desperate struggles to win Elvin, a young

filmmaker, while she remains oblivious to some key facts: Elvin's trying to be friends with Janet's photographer brother, Janet's platonic male friend has more than platonic interest in her, and Janet's father is having an affair with a neighbor. Though this has the gleefully gushing and self-absorbed tone (as well as the British setting and voice) of Rennison's *Angus, Thongs, and Full-Frontal Snogging* (BCCB 5/00), it too often is what it's making fun of, and Janet's old enough that her stunning superficiality seems more like an offputting personality trait than a stage of growth. The lavish use of creative font is amusing, however, and there are rich veins of humor mined from the various trappings of trendy teenage life, such as the problems of nose rings when you're trying to hide under a table ("What I was doing at that very moment was kneeling in some ketchup trying to unhook my nose ring from his trousers without unhooking my nose as well") and crucial but easily losable cell phones ("I reach out for it and it isn't there. My fingers touch the air and I wonder why. Why? Why has this happened to me?"). Meg Cabot's *All American Girl* (BCCB 12/02) is a better recent treatment of a wannabe deepster, but this is still an amusing exploration of a character readers will enjoy thinking they're nothing like. A glossary of British terms is included. DS

SHEPARD, AARON, ad. *The Princess Mouse: A Tale of Finland*; illus. by Leonid Gore. Atheneum, 2003 32p
ISBN 0-689-82912-4 \$16.95

R 5-8 yrs

Two brothers seek sweethearts to take to wife, following a family tradition that dictates that the brothers find their brides by chopping down a tree and then traveling in the direction the tree falls. The eldest brother causes his tree to point in the direction of his already-identified sweetie; the younger brother, Mikko, winds up walking into the woods. There Mikko finds a bride, a sweet gray mouse with a velvety coat, and despite their obvious differences, the two swear to be true to each another. On Mikko and the mouse bride's wedding day, Mikko's older brother reacts to his future sister-in-law with scorn, kicking the small carriage that carries her into the river. To the surprise of all, the dunking breaks an enchantment, and from the water comes not a mouse but a lovely princess. Shepard, reteller of traditional tales such as *Master Man* (BCCB 2/01), curtails the traditional use of threes in European folktales, limiting this tale to two brothers and one bride test, thus leaving room for a bit more description. Although there is little tension in the plot, the marital preparations of characters human and rodent are appealingly handled, and the tone of the text itself is successfully humorous. Gore's acrylic and pastel illustrations here have a lighter touch than some of his previous work. The contrast between light and dark gives the images a stage-lit quality that adds drama and intensity, while the palette (summery greens, blues, and yellows) maintains the lighthearted quality of this cozy adaptation. JMD

SIDMAN, JOYCE *The World according to Dog: Poems and Teen Voices*; illus. with photographs by Doug Mindell. Houghton, 2003 [80p]
ISBN 0-618-17497-4 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

R* Gr. 6-12

Not a dog person? Then move along now, because this tender and eloquent volume is a canophile's paradise and tribute, inviting doglovers to roll in it with the same luxurious glee with which their pets would greet long-dead carrion. Sidman offers a score of fluid and lyrical poems, divided into four sections ("Awakening,"

"Tag," "Understanding," "Happiness"), about various aspects of dog nature and behavior, opposite personable (doggable?) photographic portraits in moody black-and-white; each section is also sprinkled with two or three heartfelt essays by young people on their own important canines. The three components braid together beautifully: the poems offer telling and recognizable human views of dog life, and the essays, beaming with the fresh-faced talent of their eager young authors, provide moving testimony to the value for humans of the human-dog relationship ("I wouldn't trade him for the world, because he is my world"); the scenically blurred photographs bring the dogs themselves literally into the picture, characterizing without sentimentalizing. Suitable for reading aloud (or to one's dog) and panting with eagerness to inspire similarly pet-oriented projects in an English class, this will also extend a friendly paw to those reluctant readers, especially of poetry, who can't resist soulful eyes and a wagging tail. DS

SLADE, ARTHUR *Dust*. Lamb, 2003 [192p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-385-90093-7 \$17.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-385-73004-7 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

Robert Steelgate knows he should have offered to walk with his brother Matthew into town on the day the younger boy accepted a ride from a stranger and disappeared. In spite of this burden of guilt, Robert knows he isn't responsible for the disappearance of other children from the area, or the wave of forgetfulness and odd behavior that has taken hold of the adults in his drought-plagued farming region. Even his parents have ceased to show concern for their missing boy as, like their neighbors, they become caught up in newcomer Abram Harsich's plan to build a rain "mill" that will make their land fertile again. Few persons resist con-man Harsich's influence, and one by one neighbors who won't join the construction crew pay the price with fatal heart attacks and devastated property. Robert both observes and senses that all these occurrences are related, and when he musters the courage to trespass on Harsich's house and mill, he discovers a diabolical pact that has put the missing children and townsfolk within the mysterious man's power. Slade generates genuine edge-of-the-seat tension, cannily conjuring evil from the very ordinariness of the Depression-era Canadian Dust Bowl town. He succeeds so well, in fact, that the final unmasking of Harsich and his machine come as a bit of a disappointment, relying on gizmos and aliens and supernatural transformations rather than horrifying reality to carry the climax. Still, readers are so compellingly swept into the action that they're bound to ride the wind wherever Slade—and Harsich—take them. EB

STADLER, JOHN *Catilda*; written and illus. by John Stadler. Jackson/Atheneum, 2003 32p

ISBN 0-689-84728-9 \$16.95

R 3-6 yrs

Catilda, a young kitten, loses her beloved teddy bear, Ollie, on a trip to the city, so she goes in search of him. With the assistance of various helpers—a red bird, some dolphins, a transporting cloud—she recovers Ollie, who is waiting for her in the crown of the Statue of Liberty. The flame of the statue's torch bursts Catilda's cloud like a bubble, but she is saved from tumbling into the bay by a passing prop plane; when Ollie falls out of the plane Catilda leaps onto a rainbow slide which conveniently deposits her in her very own room, and the red bird plucks Ollie

from the sea and delivers him to Catilda, just in time for her to get into bed before her parents come in and check on her. The fantastical rescue mission takes place entirely in the art, while a conversation between Catilda's parents, who discuss their daughter's loss, uses the text to provide a contrasting narrative. The back-and-forth rhythm resembles that of Charlip's *Fortunately*, while the always-appealing notion of a child-and-lost-toy reality that escapes the adults recalls Vulliamy's *Small* (BCCB 4/02). The text floats in dialogue balloons across the tops and bottoms of Stadler's simple watercolors; the palette is clean if a little bland, with sky blue a prevailing hue. The figures are simple yet strongly patterned (prick-eared Catilda, though white with orange features, resembles Felix the Cat), rising to the challenge of supplying emotional engagement without the assistance of the contrasting text. Audiences will enjoy the discrepancy between the conversation of the unsuspecting parents and the perilous adventures of Catilda. JMD

STRASSER, TODD *Thief of Dreams*. Putnam, 2003 [176p]

ISBN 0-399-23135-8 \$16.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-8

When thirteen-year-old Martin Hunter's parents go to China for a month on business, they leave Martin, implausibly enough, in the care of his dad's estranged brother, whom they haven't seen or spoken to for years. Uncle Lawrence is charming—so charming, in fact, that both Martin's Danish nanny, Elka, and his psychologist, Dr. Rodriguez, soon become enamored of this mysterious stranger who has a trunkload of strange equipment and only goes out at night. These elements—the out-of-reach parents, the besotted nanny, the psychologist with divided loyalties, and the slightly sinister uncle—are lifted straight out of a noir universe and whet the appetite for some delicious creepiness to follow. Strasser, however, takes a different and rather less successful direction. Upon finding out that his uncle is a thief (a fact that the alert reader will discern far sooner than our protagonist), Martin performs a bit of therapy, locating the source of Lawrence's miscreant occupation in his competitive relationship with Martin's father and convincing him that he should turn himself in, pay his debt to society, and go straight thereafter (supported by Martin and the lovely Dr. Rodriguez). The familial resolution is similarly clichéd, with Martin's mother regretting her preoccupation with work (Martin's father apparently has no regrets about his own problematic parenting) and making a lightning-fast shift to stay-at-home mom, waiting for Martin to come home from school so that she can be there, literally, with milk and cookies. The moral is as unambiguous as it is banal; nonetheless, it appeals to a certain kind of idealism that believes that the lure of domesticity and common sense can indeed triumph over all, and the dark and exciting setup will have kids reconsidering their own mysterious relatives. KC

SWINBURNE, STEPHEN R. *The Woods Scientist*; illus. with photographs by Susan C. Morse. Houghton, 2003 [48p] (Scientists in the Field)

ISBN 0-618-04602-X \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-8

Swinburne's second offering in this solid series follows the life and career of Susan C. Morse, forester, ecologist, and founder of Keeping Track, a nonprofit community-based conservation organization that works to track the comings and goings of local wildlife, to conceive creative solutions to preserve the habitats of

our wild neighbors, and to protect the corridors that connect these habitats. Mingled with facts and explanations about the habits and needs of woodland wildlife are details from Morse's life, statements of her philosophy of conservation, and glimpses of the kinds of discoveries adults and children make on the tracking expeditions she leads. Morse's photographs of specimens intersperse with dramatic images of the animals and landscapes themselves. Several provocative suggestions for classroom and community activities are included, as are print and electronic resources for further study, a glossary, and an index. Practical tips about tracking (how to practice "safe scat," how to backtrack an animal to find out where it's been rather than following it directly, how to read the signs animals leave on trees) will no doubt encourage young readers to head to the woods. KC

TOMECEK, STEVE *Stars*; illus. by Sachiko Yoshikawa. National Geographic, 2003 [32p] (Jump into Science)
ISBN 0-7922-6955-1 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 4-7 yrs

Bold acrylic paintings with bright thematic borders invite children to investigate the pinpoint lights in the night sky. The emphasis is on the composition of stars, their appearance within constellations, and factors influencing their relative brightness when viewed from Earth. While the textual data is reasonably child friendly and well organized, the visually appealing diagrams are less than helpful. A spread demonstrating the distances of various stars from Earth is so far out of scale as to be misleading (even the nearer stars are out of sync with each other), and our Sun isn't even included for comparison. A flipped chart of stars seen from the South Pole never explains why the view is different down under. Moreover, the closing "Star Light, Star Bright" experiment is truly problematic, encouraging children to ponder the relative brightness of near and far stars by looking directly at approaching and retreating flashlights in a darkened room. The inviting design may lure an audience, but sky watchers will probably do better with Franklyn Branley's classic astronomical picture books. EB

WALTON, RICK *Bunnies on the Go: Getting from Place to Place*; illus. by Paige Miglio. HarperCollins, 2003 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-029186-9 \$16.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-029185-0 \$15.99

Ad 3-5 yrs

The bunny family has an ambitious vacation planned this summer, and they'll need multiple means of conveyance to get them to all the sites. For "Bunnies, we'll be traveling far,/ Every bunny, into the . . .," the audience should readily supply the missing rhyme with just the visual prompt of the red convertible parked outside the window, but for listeners who don't immediately get the hang of the narrative scheme, "CAR" heads the following page. After a brief ride "up a highway, down a lane./ Now, bunnies, all aboard the . . ." they're guided by a discreetly placed street sign to the railroad station and the now predictable "TRAIN." Tractor, balloon, boat, bike, truck, bus, ferry, and taxicab haul the adventurers from activity to activity, until the exhausted bunch boards a plane: "The bunnies love to ride and roam,/ But best of all is coming . . ./ HOME!" Not all rhymes are successful, and Walton occasionally struggles to pull the highlighted transport into the poetic scheme. Moreover, there's a slight disparity between the very youthful concept of naming transportation modes and the busily detailed watercolor scenes

that need to be scanned for clues. Still, it's a pretty lively jaunt overall, and young transport-spothers could turn this into an observation game on their next road trip. EB

WILSON, KARMA *Bear Wants More*; illus. by Jane Chapman. McElderry, 2003 34p

ISBN 0-689-84509-X \$16.95

Ad 3-6 yrs

Bear wakes up hungry after a long winter nap, so off he goes in search of sustenance. Fresh shoots and grass are nice but insufficient ("He nibbles on his lawn/ till the last blade is gone./ But/ the bear/ wants more!"). One by one his friends try to fill him up: Mouse with strawberries, Hare with clover, Badger with fish, and Gopher, Mole, Raven and Wren with a feast of honey cakes, which Bear gobbles until "his big tummy aches." Wilson's rhyming text is somewhat pedestrian, but wordplay surprises add interest and the refrain provides an echoing continuity and opportunity for participation throughout. The acrylic paintings tend towards the slick and facile, but the cozy green forest is cheery if Disneyfied; the animal denizens have bright, black-bead eyes and smiling muzzles (or beaks, in the case of the feathered ones) and the fuzzy, fluffy bodies of stuffed animals. Lively performance will overcome many of the book's flaws, and audiences at storytimes and bedtime readalouds will enjoy this big friendly Bear in his big friendly book. JMD

WINTER, JEANETTE *Niño's Mask*; written and illus. by Jeanette Winter. Dial, 2003 34p

ISBN 0-8037-2807-7 \$15.99

Ad 4-7 yrs

Young Niño is very excited about the upcoming fiesta, but his parents keep telling him that his time in a dramatic mask and bright costume will have to wait until he is older. The resourceful Niño decides to make a mask of his own, watching the maskmaker carefully and making himself into a *perro* (dog); at the fiesta, Niño throws himself into the *perro*'s traditional role with glee, successfully catching the *tigre* and thereby saving the corn (and making his parents very proud). The restriction of the text to dialogue balloons keeps the proceedings immediate, and the little guy's secret participation and victory are enjoyable. Unfortunately, the plot is surprisingly slow moving for such a stimulating subject, and it's predictable every step of its traveloguish way. Winter has swapped her usual paints for felt-tip pens here, and the result isn't as strong: though the black lines help emphasize the clear and spicy colors, compositions are sometimes cluttered by the forest of line and their movement and focus eclipsed by the busy outlines. The author's *Josefina* (BCCB 10/96) is a better book about the joys of folk art, but the tour through various aspects of the fiesta may make a useful start for discussion, and kids may still appreciate watching a comrade get around the restriction of "When you are older." Appended information includes a brief glossary and other details of the fiesta. DS

WOODSON, JACQUELINE *Locomotion*. Putnam, 2003 100p

ISBN 0-399-23115-3 \$15.99

R Gr. 4-8

In this poetic narrative, Lonnie Collins Motion (known as Locomotion) is an eleven-year-old orphan living with Miss Edna, his foster parent. Since the death of their parents in a fire five years ago, he and his younger sister, Lili, have lived apart; now Lili is living with a "new mama" who doesn't want Lonnie ("Lili's new mama

didn't want no boys/ Just a sweet little girl. Nobody told me that/ I just know it"). One of Lonnie's school assignments is keeping a poetry journal, in which he works out his feelings and finds his poetic voice. This summary may sound prescriptive, but the novel is far from it: Lonnie is an articulate child of tragedy, in recovery from the loss of his beloved parents and saddened by his separation from his sister; he has nightmares about the fire that took his parents, he wonders if he will ever feel as though he belongs to anyone or anywhere, and he endures the loneliness of the bereft. The poems change subtly from the beginning to the end of his journal, reflecting both specific school assignments (the impetus for poems in various forms) and his growing mastery of and comfort with poetic expression. Woodson is such an accomplished writer that her verse, with its occasional flashes of metaphoric brilliance, resonates as distinctively as her controlled prose. The author deals with racism, grief, loss, and growing up without a wasted word but still in language believable as that of an eleven-year-old boy. This is one of those rare titles for young readers that considers complex issues of life, loss, and hope yet remains accessible from tentative opening to hopeful ending. JMD

YEP, LAURENCE *The Traitor: Golden Mountain Chronicles: 1885*. HarperCollins, 2003 [320p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027523-5 \$17.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027522-7 \$16.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-8

Two preadolescent boys, alternate narrators, tell of rising tension between Chinese and Anglo coal miners resulting in a massacre of the "foreigners," an incident that actually took place in Rock Springs, Wyoming in 1885. The main characters here are both outcasts among their own people, Joseph Young because he feels more American than Chinese, and Michael Purdy because he is the illegitimate son of a poor laundry woman. Meeting in a cave full of fossils, they form a friendship that ultimately frees them both from the town's vicious prejudice. Yep has researched the historical background for this novel as carefully as he has for the other *Golden Mountain Chronicles*, and the story has some gripping scenes—as when Joseph defies his father to cut off his queue, an act that also cuts off his access to Manchu-dominated China. The cast of characters is obviously balanced to include representatives of diverse attitudes, but some of these, like the preacher's daughters, are generically portrayed. Too often the characters repeat messages potentially or already delivered by the action (we hear four times in one early chapter that Michael believes his mother's problems are all his fault). The book nevertheless depicts indelibly and dramatically an aspect of American ethnic violence that is rarely treated in literature for young people. An afterword places the story in U.S. history and in the development of Yep's series on Chinese-American history. BH



PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS: RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

TRACHTENBERG, ELLEN *A Parent's Guide to the Best Children's Literature*. Parent's Guide Press, 2003 [312p]

Paper ed. ISBN 1-931199-18-3 \$17.95

Reviewed from galleys

Bank Street College alumna and former classroom teacher Trachtenberg has compiled a list of more than 1,000 recommended books, with the goal of providing a general tool for adults seeking guidance through the plethora of titles available for youth. The bibliography is divided into six chapters: Infant/Toddler Books, Picture Books, Story Books, Easy Readers, Nonfiction (which is subdivided into subjects), and Juvenile Fiction/Chapter Books. Entries include basic bibliographic information, a recommended age level, and a brief descriptive annotation with suggestions of additional titles by the same author, or titles with similar appeal. Some chapters also include parent/child reviews, paragraphs on featured authors, and topical digressions in shaded text blocks for additional insights into recommended materials. Coverage is a bit uneven: there are 70 pages of picture books, for example, but only 68 pages of nonfiction covering 42 subjects, the easy-reader chapter leans heavily toward series reviews as opposed to reviews of individual titles, and the fiction selection is a combination of standard classics and stock popular fare. Still, the coverage of books for younger children is quite good here, and the recommended titles are solid, if not extensive, across all topic areas. An index will be included in the bound book. JMD

WILSON, ELIZABETH LARAWAY *Books Children Love: A Guide to the Best Children's Literature*. Crossway Books, 2002 illus. with photographs 320p

Paper ed. ISBN 1-58134-198-9 \$14.99

Christian publisher Crossway/Good News here offers a revised edition of Wilson's 1987 title. The introduction clearly states the book's orientation and purpose: to alert parents to well-written books that reflect basic Judeo-Christian moral and ethical values. The book is divided into sections by subject with some subdivisions for theme and age group; entries include bibliographic information, recommended grade levels, and (for the majority of titles) extensive, informative annotations. Many of the entries are relatively recent titles (1990s or later), with a few classic books included, although some areas (such as Biography and Nature, Science, and Technology) suffer from minimal or dated entries. Overall the literature selections are critically recognized titles that, although possibly conservative in subject matter, are not necessarily stuffy, with Haugaard's *Little Fishes* recommended alongside Jiménez' *The Circuit* and Bauer's *Hope Was Here*. Supplemental Teaching Resources are dated, and there are no books about sexuality, but there are especially solid sections of craft and dance and theater materials. This title would be useful for homeschoolers, for those libraries developing collections for this book's intended audience, and for other adults seeking guidance to quality books for youth. An author-title index is included. JMD

SUBJECT AND USE INDEX

Keyed to *The Bulletin's* alphabetical arrangement by author, this index, which appears in each issue, can be used in three ways. Entries in regular type refer to subjects; entries in **bold type** refer to curricular or other uses; entries in ALL-CAPS refer to genres and appeals. In the case of subject headings, the subhead "stories" refers to books for the readaloud audience; "fiction," to those books intended for independent reading.

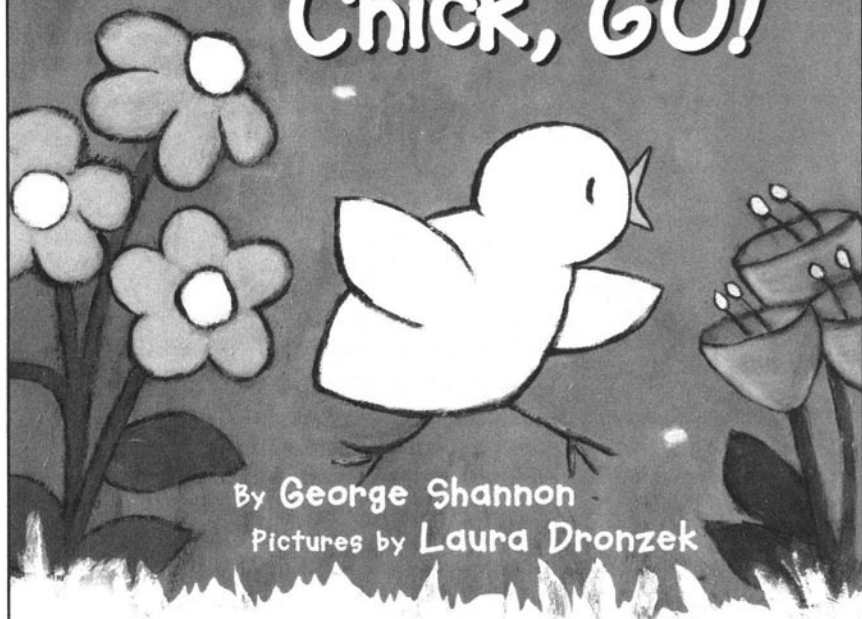
- Adoption-fiction: Cushman
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Women's studies: Deak
 World War II: Levine



Tippy-Toe Chick, GO!



By George Shannon

Pictures by Laura Dronzek

★ “Each day, Hen takes her chicks into the garden for ‘their favorite treat—sweet itty-bitty beans and potato bugs’—until the day they find the path guarded by a loud and grumpy dog. Hen despairs, but all three chicks think they can best the brute. But [it’s only] Little Chick ‘tippy-toe, tippy-toe’ [who succeeds] and ‘into the garden they go.’ The story structure has the appeal of ‘The Three Billy Goats Gruff’ . . .

[and] with the bold art and chant-along repetition, this will serve equally well for preschool groups or beginning readers.”

—Starred review / *The Horn Book*



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\$16.89 Lb (0-06-029824-3)



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Isabel Allende

City of the Beasts

Translated from the Spanish
by Margaret Sayers Peden



“Acclaimed author Allende’s first YA novel, part thrilling survival adventure, part coming-of-age journey, blends magical realism with grim history and contemporary politics in a way that shakes up all the usual definitions of savagery and civilization. Alex, 15 . . . [accompanies] his journalist grandmother on an expedition deep into the heart of the Amazon jungle. They are searching for a legendary beast, a gigantic, possibly humanoid creature that has been glimpsed in the area. . . . Readers will race through this for the story, then stop and think about the issues of wildness, survival, and the nature of beasts and humans.”


—Starred review / ALA Booklist

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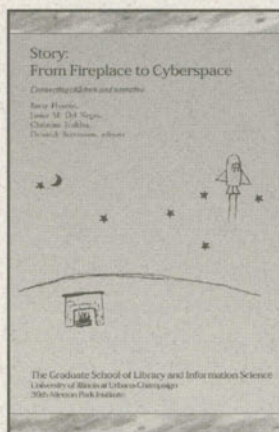
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ISBN 0-87845-105-6;
 Number 39; 143 pages;
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STORY: FROM FIREPLACE TO CYBERSPACE
Connecting Children and Narrative

EDITED BY BETSY HEARNE, JANICE M. DEL NEGRO,
 CHRISTINE JENKINS, AND DEBORAH STEVENSON

Papers Presented at the Allerton Park Institute
 Sponsored October 26-28, 1997, by the
 Graduate School of Library and Information Science
 University of Illinois

In our interest in children's welfare, we often forget that children are not simply passive receptacles for whatever treasure or trash the adult world throws at them but are lively agents who are continually interacting with their environment. Children actively create meaning as readers, viewers, and listeners. The 39th Allerton Park Institute papers emphasize the critical need to connect children and narrative as a way to affect their development as listeners, readers, viewers, and evaluators of literature—and information in all forms.

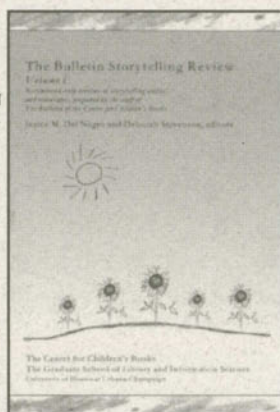
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